american craft

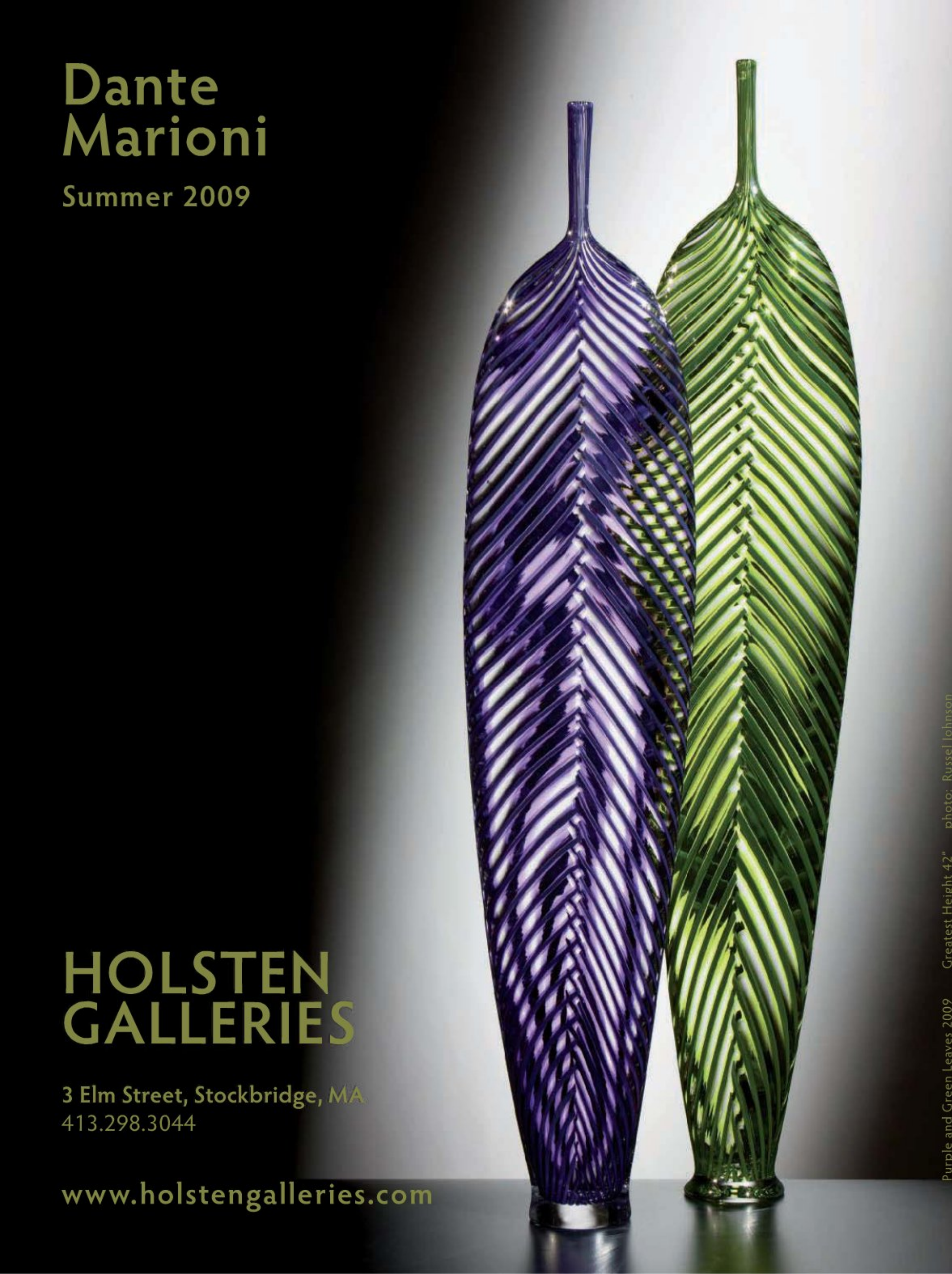
New Horizons for Ceramist Kathy Erteman

Twin Cities Crafts Abound in the Land of 10,000 Lakes

A Century Ago Omega Workshops Led British Artists to the Applied Arts



americancraftmag.org


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Purple and Green Leaves 2009 Greatest Height 42" photo: Russel Johnson

Vol. 69, No. 4
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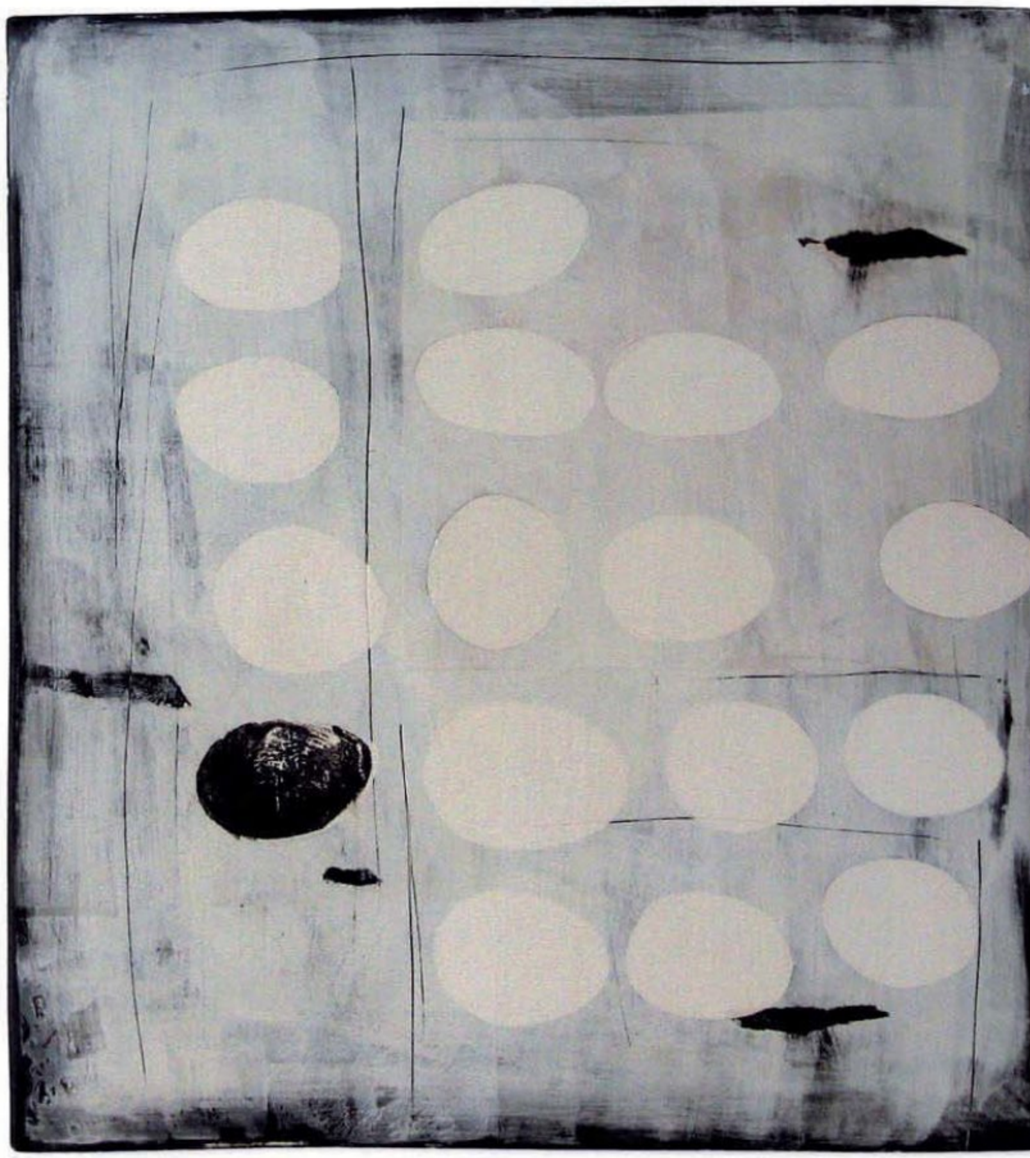
On the Cover: Winifred Gill's *Design for Toy Figure: Castanet Dance,* exemplifies the spirit of the Omega Workshops. **page 046**

Above: Hella Jongerius's *Non-Temporary Ceramics*, 2005, in a comprehensive survey of contemporary European design. **page 032**

Departments

Features

In both design and studio pieces the work of New York ceramist Kathy Erteman evokes sculpture and painting.



Kathy Erteman's *Loner,* 2008, slip and glaze on whiteware {h. 18 in, w. 16 in}, highlights her modernist sensibility.

americancraftmag.org
More photos, more reviews, more listings, more interviews and more of everything craft-related and beyond.

FERRIN GALLERY

FerrinGallery.com



Red Weldon Sandlin, *Hidden Identitea*, 2009, 12.5 x 17 x 12". photo: John Polak.

through September 5

TEAPOTS: INTERPRETATIONS

group show of teapots, objects and still lifes featuring the classic form of the teapot



Michael Kline, *detail of woodfired stoneware jar.*

ongoing group and solo exhibitions

STUDIO POTTERY

functional ceramics by over 30 potters



Wild Savage, 22 x 10 x 10", porcelain, underglaze, luster and drift wood

August 1–September 12

JASON WALKER

HUMAN MADE WILD

solo exhibition of ceramic sculpture



Coup de Tois, 2009, 15 x 11 x 10", porcelain, decals, luster. photographer: Kendrick Moholt

August 1–September 12

CHRIS ANTEMANN

BATTLE OF THE BRITCHES

solo exhibition of ceramic sculpture

437 North Pittsfield, MA 01201 413.442.1622

Tuning In…



Andy Brayman's Change Dish on our June/July cover.



Kathryn Pannepacker and the *Wall of Rugs* on our April/May cover.

The Fabric of Society

I thoroughly enjoyed the April/May cover article, "Urban Fabric." It is very refreshing to see an artist producing work that not only pushes the edges of creativity (how cool to mix textile and wall mural art) but creates space for tolerance, understanding and appreciation of different cultures and points of view. This is art that creates real change in the fabric of society and it doesn't get any better than that! Thanks for such an inspiring piece.

KILKENNY TREMBLAY
Atlanta, Georgia

What Function?

It is never fair to characterize a publication, or an organization, based on the content of a single article, but "Making the Most of the Margins," June/July, illustrates the cause of much frustration with both American Craft and the American Craft Council: an ambiguous aesthetic perspective. In this issue, purportedly dedicated to exploring the role of function, according to the Editor's Letter, this topic is more often dismissed ("I'll spare you any sentimental tangents about the way it feels…") than discussed. Perhaps it's hard to find words to describe the emotional complexity of a beautifully useful object, or maybe it's just more titillating to deal with the novelty of a "sparkling younger sibling."

The Council's erratic relationship with traditional, functional craft is clearly channeled in [Andy] Brayman's own description of his commitment to making functional pottery: "I don't want to say I'm devoted to it because I'm not afraid to do other work, but it is important. And I find the constraints tolerable, even inspiring." That this commentary on an artist's uncertain position is part of the lead article in an issue devoted to function reveals confusion at the core of the Council.

While avoiding serious analysis of the aesthetic merit of functional art forms, the ACC languishes for want of an aesthetic mandate more pointed than material identification. Continuing down the path of self-deprecation could end in self-destruction.

Might it help to dispense with the overburdened terminology of past discussions—"craft" and "functional"—and start afresh with "useful"? That may encourage a more

confident and complete discussion of the significance of the "useful arts" and a more clearly defined aesthetic mandate for the Council and its publication.
CURTIS BENZLE
Huntsville, Alabama

Editors' Note: As you noted, the June/July issue was devoted to exploring function. We'd like to take it a step beyond that and say it celebrated the concept. Artists such as Brayman who find function to be inspiring continue to awe us with their beautiful, useful objects. While the Brayman piece may not have answered your question on where the magazine stands on function, we hope you found the many other parts of our June/July issue helped, including the two other features, on Jerome and Evelyn Ackerman and Margaret O'Rorke. And, of course, last but not least, our "From the Stacks" reminder of the devotion to function of the late, great Sam Maloof.

More to Say

I just did your [members] survey. It did not give me the chance to say we are required to be members and to get the magazine when we are artists in ACC shows. It's a shame that the thousands of artists in all media who sell their works at these shows do not get better exposure in the magazine.

The promise that the organization would raise the level of consciousness in America for handmade things has not been met in the 35 years I have been in the glass field. The tone of the magazine has shifted to an urban awareness of handcrafts as important by merit of their weirdness and non-compatibility with real life. The function and use I was taught in school fell out of fashion.

The upcoming generation, I agree, is a hard sell for handcrafts. If it's not electronic or something for the body, they won't look. Why not a return to the value and integrity of the handmade things that we use everyday? Beauty, Imagination, Value—those are my business keywords, which we use on our printed materials.

Now artists who make a living in the crafts are in a mess trying to stay afloat. It is the worst climate for the handcraft business. I have a vault of 35 years of development in studio glass (we used to save a piece from every new series). Maybe now is the time to reconnect with the survivors of these rough times.
ANN CORCORAN NOUROT
Benicia, California

Lucie Rie Query

Following my biography of Bernard Leach, I have now been commissioned by Yale University Press to write a book on Lucie Rie, one of the great potters of the 20th century. This will look at her life and work in the wider European context and at the way it reflected and fitted in with the basic tenets of modernism. I am keen to communicate with people who knew her in the U.S. or had communication with her. Letters and personal memories help to create a fuller picture of her life, and I very much welcome hearing from anyone about this.

I can be contacted at emmanuelcooper@lineone.net or by post via Ceramic Review, 25 Foubert's Place, London W1F 7QF, UK
EMMANUEL COOPER
London, England

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New York, New York 10012

Change & Continuity

Probably every creative person has had to devise a tool—large or small, simple or complex—for a special purpose. Tell us about your best invention.

You might have noticed a different name at the top of our masthead. Our dynamic editor-in-chief, Andrew Wagner, has moved on, but he left his mark on American Craft during his two and a half years here. He led the re-design and re-launch of the magazine, set up a great website (americancraftmag.org—do check it out!), and established new contacts and programs. You'll find him now at *ReadyMade* magazine, still carrying a torch for craft.

Janet Koplos, longtime editor at *Art in America* and co-author of the forthcoming *Makers: A History of American Studio Craft*, is stepping in as guest editor. The magazine continues in Andrew's mold, featuring in this issue Kathy Erteman's work on both the design and studio sides of craft. The line between design and craft has always been blurred; in the 50s the popular term was "designer-craftsman" and the supposition was that the direct knowledge of materials inherent to craft could contribute something valuable to industrial production. Isn't that still true today?

We also introduce new elements that build on our format and focus. "Voices" asks a question—light or not-so-light—of a variety of readers. "Considering…" is a column of ruminations on craft that will be shared by essayist Akiko Busch, author of *The Uncommon Life of Common Objects* and other titles, and craft historian Glenn Adamson, an editor of the scholarly *Journal of Modern Craft*. Adamson leads off in this issue, and Busch's first contribution will appear in the October/November number.

Looking ahead: Probably every creative person has had to devise a tool—large or small, simple or complex—for a special purpose. Send us a high-res digital image and short caption, and we'll feature a selection of reports in a forthcoming issue.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Janet Chris

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american craft

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An up close guide to books, galleries, people & places



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Fluffy bracelets photo/Shell Hensleigh.

Radar

Testing the Boundaries of Beauty

Susan Hoge made her name creating beaded jewelry in gemstones and gold. At the height of her success, she went back to school for a "radical change." Now 46, she has gone in a provocative new direction–beadwork that's beautiful but not pretty, such as her Chordata ____ series, 2007–2008 ❶.

"I wanted to shake myself up, make something different," she says of her decision to enroll at Cranbrook Academy of Art, not far from her Michigan home. The detour wasn't really out of character for Hoge, a free spirit at heart. Though she's a disciplined master of her craft, meticulous about materials, she feels her best designs come when she lets her unconscious guide her hands. "I don't like to know what I'm going to end up with, because then it's labor. It keeps me surprised to not know how it's going to turn out."

Her life, too, has followed a meandering path. Hoge grew up playing the flute and leaned toward music until, as a student at the University of Michigan, she took ceramics and fell in love with handwork. After graduating she followed the Grateful Dead for a while, stringing beads at concerts. She honed her skills restoring tribal pieces at a beadwork gallery in Michigan, then moved to New Mexico, where she made samples in an "Indian jewelry" factory. Switching course again, she headed to New York to study at the Fashion Institute of Technology, and her career took off. By the early 2000s Hoge was making sensuous, highly wearable jewelry that turned up in *Vogue,* including her Fluffy bracelets ❷. She designed for Fred Leighton, did high-end fairs, and was represented by galleries around the country. After a few years of that whirl, she felt burnt out. "I said, is this what I want to do with my life? I had to slow down, stop."

Cranbrook was the creative tonic Hoge needed. There she experimented with sculpting in chocolate, hair and blown sugar. She then returned to beadwork, making a series of small, sculptures of lustrous seed pearls over a skeleton of "banal objects" (twigs, foam, silicone). Skin and bones, mystery and illusion are themes of these pieces, which are anatomically suggestive and meant to unsettle. Sometimes Hoge ups the squirm factor by displaying them with surgical instruments.

"What she did was really test the boundaries of what beauty was for her," observes the German-born artist Iris Eichenberg, head of metals at Cranbrook. "Where does beauty and seduction end and repulsion begin? Where is that fine, fine balance? She tested that line by making work that had a strong erotic sense, but that was also very repulsive." Using the classic language of a string of pearls, Hoge's objects politely undermine our associations of purity and propriety. "They are organic forms that seem familiar, but are slightly off," says Eichenberg. "Beauty always has a presence of something which might be nasty or scary, and she succeeded in finding a recipe to combine those things."

But fans of Hoge's old-school-beautiful jewelry needn't despair. Content with having pushed the limits, "I still want to continue doing my wearable work," she says, "to take fine materials and make something interesting out of them." —J.L.

susanhoge.com

Hot Spots

Standouts

Gallery shows, listed A–Z by state. View complete calendar: americancraftmag.org

CA / Pasadena
Pasadena Museum of California Art
Edith Heath: Tabletop Modernist
to Sept. 30
pmcaonline.org
Heath Ceramics, started in 1944, helped define mid-century modernism.

CA / Sacramento
Crocker Art Museum
Soaring Voices: Contemporary Japanese Women Ceramic Artists
Aug. 8–Oct. 18
crockerartmuseum.org
Works by 25 pioneering females who made their mark upon Japan's once male-only field of ceramics.

CO / Fort Collins
Lincoln Center Galleries
28th Annual Fabric of Legacies Art Quilt Exhibition
to Aug. 28
lctix.com
Stitched scenes may lift viewers' spirits to a Rocky Mountain high.

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Preview
Landscapes in the Grain

Bellevue Arts Museum
Michael Peterson: Evolution/ Revolution
Bellevue, Washington
April 9 – September 20, 2009
bellevuearts.org

The Northwest artist Michael Peterson has shifted over the past 20 years from a masterful maker of turned wood bowls into a sculptor of organic abstract works whose complex forms and textured surfaces are achieved through a variety of processes without the use of the lathe. This exhibition demonstrates Peterson's progression from turner to carver to sculptor through more than 30 works–some 15 vessel forms shown alongside more than 20 of his most recent sculptures.

Peterson's chosen material is the burl portion of trees–dome-shaped outgrowths of madrone, maple, elm, locust and others–that he is drawn to for their organic form as well as their density and unique grain patterns. He harvests this idiosyncratic material from downed timber he finds near his home on Lopez Island in Washington State. The Texas-born artist settled in the Northwest in the 1970s, lured by the physical environment, especially the native woods.

In his quest to explore the qualities of these woods, Peterson developed techniques such as bleaching, sandblasting and pigmenting to transform the material to evoke landscapes. One sees this in the surfaces of turned works like *Taos,* 1989 ❶, or *Landscape* series, 1989 ❷. "I think what was happening was that my techniques were becoming aligned or in accord with the natural processes of nature, such as the effects of wind and water, sand and sun, all working away on surfaces and forms," says Peterson, in an interview with Michael Monroe, the show's co-curator, published in the catalog.

Gradually abandoning the lathe for the chainsaw and carving tools, Peterson shaped or hollowed out chunks of wood, often working it in its wet, green state. He created groupings, generally paired forms, which sometimes resembled birds, stones and other natural elements. In his most recent pieces, for example, *Coastal Stacks VI* ❸, he goes vertical, building multiple hollowed out boxlike units into asymmetrical arrangements that suggest wave-tossed driftwood on a beach. Where the earlier turned pieces contained landscapes, these works seem to be landscapes in themselves, the effect enhanced by Peterson's rich use of color.

Though the latest works seem radically different from the early vessels–the "revolution" implied by the show's title–the continuity of Peterson's oeuvre is apparent, not only in the persistent landscape theme but also in the realization, as one observes these forms and textures–no two alike–that this is work that grows out of its making, following its own logic, rather than any predetermined plan. As Peterson says, quoted by Kevin Wallace, "When starting a piece it's not always best to know where it's headed. Rather than thinking my way through a piece, it's more like feeling my way through it. I'm drawn to a process that allows the material to reveal itself, and favor one that allows me to become as lost in the process as possible."—B.S.

The catalog, with essays by Michael Monroe, Robyn Horn, Matthew Kangas and Kevin Wallace, is $45.

FL / Tallahassee
❶ **Florida State University Museum of Fine Arts**
24th Tallahassee International
Aug. 24–Sept. 27
mofa.fsu.edu
A diverse showcase of talent includes the work of such artists as Rob Millard-Mendez, creator of *Ship of Geniuses*.

GA / Kennesaw
Kennesaw State University Don Russell Clayton Gallery
Spotlight 2009
Aug. 20–Sept. 24
kennesaw.edu/visual_arts/accse
A versatile exhibition of southeast makers coincides with the American Craft Council Southeast Regional Conference.

IL / Evanston
Henry Crown Sports Pavilion on Northwestern University Campus
25th Annual American Craft Exposition
Aug. 28–30
americancraftexpo.org
This exposition offers the timeless appeal of the handmade.

KS / Wichita
Wichita Center for the Arts
Wichita National All Media Craft Exhibition
Sept. 4–Oct. 18
wcfta.com
Since 1945, this esteemed show has been attracting some of the best crafts in America.

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Shop Talk

Furniture Extraordinaire

Pritam & Eames
29 Race Lane
East Hampton, New York 11937
631-324-7111
pritameames.com

On May 21, 1981, Bebe Pritam Johnson and Warren Eames Johnson❷ opened their studio furniture gallery, Pritam & Eames, in a converted 19th-century steam laundry building in East Hampton, New York. Exhibiting a mix of renowned and up-and-coming furniture makers, such as Richard Scott Newman, whose recent work includes *Child Chairs*❶, the show marked the beginning of the couple's long and exciting professional journey into the world of studio furniture.

Prior to opening the gallery, Bebe worked at the Council on International Educational Exchange and Warren worked in documentary films. What sparked this career change?
Bebe Pritam Johnson: It seemed to us that we could be working for others for the rest of our lives. Or, we could take a chance and work for ourselves.
Warren Eames Johnson: We had already worked together on some projects, including a documentary film about the Fondation Maeght in southern France in 1966. It was quite an adventure and it gave us a background in confronting difficult situations and coming through.

Your opening exhibition featured prominent furniture makers such as George Nakashima and Wendell Castle. How did such a young gallery come to represent these makers?
BPJ: The most important reason is that we went to meet these artists. We knew George Nakashima's work through the Japan Society, and colleagues there arranged a visit with him in New Hope, Pennsylvania. He didn't work with galleries—he didn't need to, actually—but we spent a pleasant afternoon with him and he kindly gave us a chair for our opening.
WEJ: I was doubtful that we could offer Wendell Castle the kind of showcase that would interest him, but Bebe was focused in her pursuit, as she rightly felt that his presence would be important in validating the gallery. So there it was: focus and pursuit.

The show also featured some less known makers at the time, such as John Dunnigan, Hank Gilpin and Michael Hurwitz, who've now made their own mark on the furniture world. How did you go about looking for these up-and-comers?
BPJ: In the late 1970s, we wrote about 50 letters to furniture makers. Only one person answered and that response has endeared Tim Philbrick to me forever. I asked him why the other 49 didn't answer; he said that furniture makers don't write letters. He said, "If you want to talk to them, you have to go to their shops." And we did. We spent a year and a half visiting all of the makers in our opening show. Beginning acquaintances on a personal basis has laid the foundation for enduring relationships in this field.

How would you describe the evolution of studio furniture? Did Pritam & Eames follow the same path?
WEJ: When we opened, some makers already referred to their work as sculpture. Over the years, the drive for acceptance, prestige and art prices has certainly influenced more makers to bend in this direction.
BPJ: We have never excluded furniture that is sculpturally strong. Still, we continue to champion functional design. We've always loved the idea of this furniture being part of someone's daily life. We never felt furniture becomes more important when labels like art or design are pinned on it. However we cannot sell just *good* furniture. There has to be an extraordinary aspect to it.—S.S.

MA / Boston
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
A New and Native Beauty: The Art and Craft of Greene and Greene
to Oct. 18
mfa.org
A comprehensive exhibition on the work of California architecture and design legends Charles Sumner Greene and Henry Mather Greene explores the evolution of the brothers' unique style. The show displays sketches, drawings, furnishings and fixtures, many long separated from their houses.

MA / Lowell
American Textile History Museum
Threads: The Weaving of Stories
to Sept. 27
athm.org
Through the versatility of textiles seven contemporary artists explore and interpret fiber's role in the many aspects of civiliation, including science, technology, fashion, history and politics.

MN / Minneapolis
❷ **Northern Clay Center**
Artists of NCC
to Aug. 30
northernclaycenter.org
Every two years, the center shines a spotlight on the functional and sculptural works of its many talented teachers, students, resident artists, including Ginny Sims, who made the stoneware *Baskets*, and clay-camp goers.



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Voices

What's the most exciting show you've seen lately?

Paul Chan's exhibition "My laws are my whores," at the Renaissance Society, University of Chicago, perhaps because it countered my expectations. I'd seen Chan's work a few times, and I was expecting an incredibly visual, somewhat poetic exhibition. Portraits of Supreme Court justices greeted viewers at the Ren, high on the entrance wall, and on the other side of the wall was a projection of vibrating naked bodies in sexual and tortuous postures. It was a tough show, formally commanding and disturbing in a thought-provoking way.
—**Anne Wilson**, *artist, professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois.*

My initial thought was not of a recent show but of an upcoming exhibition that I have been on the periphery of conversations about: "Call + Response" at the Museum of Contemporary Craft. The show pairs artists with historians who write about the work, and it includes many events to engage the public. What excites me is the emphasis on both "taking it to the streets" (in terms of the programming) and scholarly, critical interpretation of the work (made more accessible by its inclusion in the exhibition).
— **JP Reuer**, *architect, chair, MFA program in applied craft and design, Oregon College of Art and Craft and Pacific Northwest College of Art, Portland.*

❶ "Simon Starling: The Nanjing Particles" at MASS MOCA. I was captured by the austerity and simplicity of the installation on the one hand and, on the other, the absolute vividness of the artist's concept. The allure of the highly polished and reflective surfaces coupled with the unusual shapes' Herculean scale filled my visit with intrigue.
—**Mark Richard Leach**, *executive director, Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.*

Alexander Calder's jewelry and small works at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. I felt like a boy discovering what it means to be creative… stepping into the playful and creatively honest mind of Calder. I watched the video of his circus three times all the way through.… I have a poor attention span for videos in exhibitions, but seeing an aging man playing with these small circus acts reminds me that our own creations keep us young. The wire portraits were beautifully simple; if one line were taken away the composition would fall apart. This was the first show in a long time that gave me goose bumps along with a permanent smile.
—**Matthias Pliessnig**, *furniture maker, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.*

One of my favorite events in Pittsburgh is a massive communal exhibition called "Art All Night." About 800 local artists contribute a single piece of their work, which goes on display from Saturday evening through the night until about noon the next day. Thousands of people come to view the work, check out the bands and see friends. There are artists in every medium, from age 3 to age 90. With the incredible diversity of work, it's a highlight of my art-viewing experience each year.
—**Matt Eskuche**, *glass artist, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.*

❷ The most exciting show I've seen lately was Nick Cave's "Meet Me at the Center of the Earth" at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco. It was a beautiful riot of color, form and cast-off objects given a bizarre second life. It makes you want to forget the art-versus-craft debate and dive headlong into the work.
—**Erik Scollon**, *artist and writer, Oakland, California.*

I saw the new American Collections Galleries at the Milwaukee Art Museum this spring and drove back the next week to look again. These installations frame the applied arts as vital, generative and embodying contemporary issues. Outstanding is the collaborative "Loca Miraculi/Rooms of Wonder," a reinterpretation of the earliest kind of museum, the Wunderkammer, by Wisconsin artist Martha Glowacki, the Chipstone Foundation, the Madison cabinetmaker Jim Dietz and local collections.
— **Kimberly Cridler**, *metalsmith and assistant professor at University of Wisconsin, Madison.*

In March I saw a brilliant little show of postcard-size collages by Marcy McChesney. It was part of San Antonio's "Luminaria" arts festival. They formed a continuous line at eye level on all four walls of the gallery space. The works were made when she didn't have the time or space to make art, so she gave herself the charge to make one postcard a day using anything available. The result was compellingly fresh and personal.
— **Paula Owen**, *president, Southwest School of Art & Craft, San Antonio, Texas.*

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People & Places

Changes Honors, Farewells

Noteworthy
The **Philadelphia Art Alliance** is changing its exhibition focus to craft beginning with the exhibition "'Dear High Art': Contemporary Craft in Dialogue," a show featuring artists "whose work challenges a basic premise of traditional aesthetics." (philartalliance.org)… Also in September, New York's **Greenwich House Pottery** kicks off its 100th season, with special events. (greenwichhouse.org/programs/art/pottery).

Chandelier Dress by **Susan Taylor Glasgow** was a highlight, so to speak, of the "Glass Fashion Show" held at the closing-night bash of the **Glass Art Society**'s June conference in Corning, NY, a semi-tradition of GAS gatherings… *Fluent Steps*, an outdoor glass sculpture by **Martin Blank,** has been installed at the **Museum of Glass,** Tacoma, which commissioned the piece for its main plaza reflecting pool. The 207-foot-long work consists of 754 individually hand-sculpted pieces… In memory of **Anne d'Harnoncourt,** the late, longtime director of the **Philadelphia Museum of Art,** its Women's Committee commissioned the jewelry design duo **ford/forlano**–aka **Steve Ford** and **David Forlano**–to create a piece for the collection. Their large reversible necklace in silver and polymer clay–one side "subtle, classical, restrained, the other exuberant and colorful" ❶ –was recently exhibited with other highlights from the holdings.

Scott Jacobson has moved his newly named **Scott Jacobson Gallery** (formerly Leo Kaplan Modern), specializing in contemporary glass and furniture, to new quarters at 114 East 57th Street, where he shares space with the antiques-oriented Leo Kaplan Ltd., operated by his wife, Susie Kaplan Jacobson.

Mattiebelle Gittinger, a prominent scholar in the field of Southeast Asian textiles, is the 2009 recipient of the prestigious George Hewitt Myers Award from the **Textile Museum** in Washington, DC… The Ohio Designer Craftsmen Outstanding Achievement Award went this year to metalsmith **Tom Muir,** who made *Twin Riser* ❹… The **Pilchuck Glass School** honored artist **Paul Marioni** with its Libensky Award at a dinner held on the Stanwood, WA, campus in May.

Two years into a major overhaul of its American Wing ❸, the **Metropolitan Museum of Art** has reopened its Charles Engelhard Court and American period rooms, with reinterpreted displays of furniture, sculpture, stained glass, silver, pewter and jewelry. The final phase of renovations is scheduled for completion in 2011… **Eike Schmidt,** formerly a curator at the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, has joined the **Minneapolis Institute of Arts,** where he is head of decorative arts, textiles and sculpture… The new executive director/CEO of the Bellevue Arts Museum, WA, is **Mark Crawford,** who brings to the position 25 years of leadership experience with non- and for-profit organizations. **Michael Monroe,** the museum's director of curatorial affairs, will retire next February as director emeritus.

Passings
Susan Peterson ❷, 83, a ceramist and educator whose research, writing and advocacy brought new stature and wider appreciation to clay art died March 26, at her home in Scottsdale, AZ. An alumna of Mills College and the New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University, Peterson established ceramics programs at Chouinard, USC, the Idyllwild School and Hunter College before retiring in 1994. She traveled and lectured worldwide, ›

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MN / Minneapolis
❸ Walker Art Center
Dirt on Delight: Impulses That Form Clay
to Nov. 29
walkerart.org
Eugene von Bruenchenhein, who made *Sensor Pot,* and other ceramists spanning four generations fire on all cylinders, traversing delineations to collectively create an array of objects motivated by impulse.

MO / Kansas City
Belger Arts Center
El Anatsui
to Sept. 4
belgerartscenter.org
Anatsui's intricate, opulent and powerful "weavings" of found objects, such as bottle caps gathered in and around his hometown of Nsukka, Nigeria, are imaginative and resourceful.

NH / Concord
League of New Hampshire Craftsmen Gallery
Lifetime Achievement Awards Exhibition
to Aug. 12
nhcrafts.org
Featuring the work of two creative partnerships that helped shape the world of pottery: Vivika and Otto Heino and Mary and Edwin Scheier.

NM / Albuquerque
Mariposa Gallery
Julianne Harvey: Dire-rama Wildlife on the Ledge
Sept. 4–30
mariposa-gallery.com
Classic pottery forms with imagery of wildlife in peril distinguish Harvey's vessels.



Betsy Williams at Weyrich Gallery

Contemporary Craft Galleries



Barbara Ottmar at L'Attitude Gallery



Jacquline Hurlbert at White Bird Gallery

Hibberd McGrath Gallery

101 N. Main Street, PO Box 7638, Breckenridge, Colorado 80424
(970) 453-6391 • www.hibberdmcgrath.com

L'Attitude Gallery

218 Newbury Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02116
(617) 927-4400 • www.lattitudegallery.com

Obsidian Gallery

4320 N. Campbell Avenue, #130, Tucson, Arizona 85718
(520) 577-3598 • www.obsidian-gallery.com

Vermont Artisan Designs & Gallery 2

106 Main Street, Brattleboro, Vermont 05301
(802) 257-7044 • www.BuyVermontArt.com

Vessels Gallery

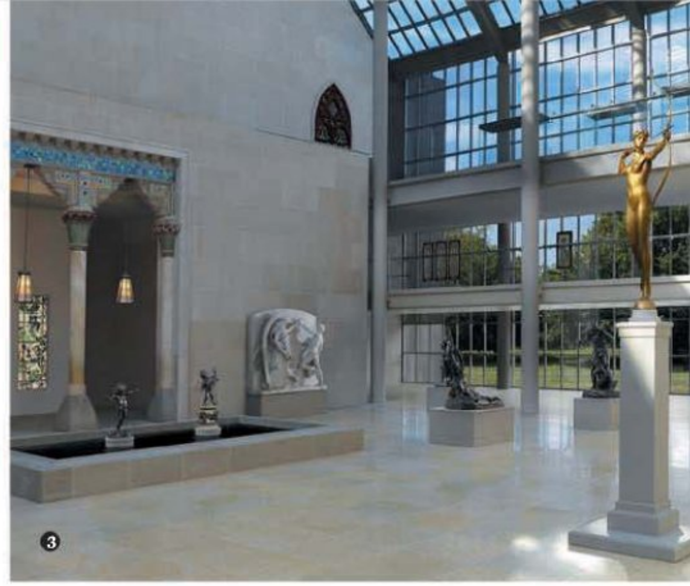
8 Union Park Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02118
(617) 424-6700 • www.vesselsgallery.com

Weyrich Gallery/The Rare Vision Art Galerie

2935-D Louisiana N.E., Albuquerque, New Mexico 87110
(505) 883-7410 • www.weyrichgallery.com

White Bird Gallery

Box 502 N. Hemlock Street, Cannon Beach, Oregon 97110
(503) 436-2681 • www.whitebirdgallery.com



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and authored the classics *The Living Tradition of Maria Martinez* (1977), *Lucy M. Lewis: American Indian Potter* (1984) and *The Craft and Art of Clay* (1992). She was an ACC Fellow, and received a lifetime achievement award from the National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts. Her collection of books, slides, notes and pottery is available for study at the Susan Harnly Peterson Ceramic Research Archive at Arizona State University. Memorial donations to support the archive may be sent to ASU Foundation, ASU Art Museum, P. O. Box 872911, Tempe, AZ 86287 (attention Peter Held, Curator of Ceramics).

Sam Maloof, 93, who for 60 years designed and built furniture prized for its beautiful woods, sinuous lines, peerless craftsmanship and perfect function, died May 21 at his home in Alta Loma, CA, following a brief illness.

Born in Chino, CA, to Lebanese immigrant parents, Maloof was a self-taught woodworker. He opened his first workshop in 1949 and achieved early success making furnishings for modern Southern California interiors. As his work evolved, he became a monumental figure in the craft world, beloved for his artistry, integrity and warmth.

"From the outset Maloof committed himself to a singular vision," Jeremy Adamson wrote in his book accompanying Maloof's 2001 retrospective at the Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery. Presidents Carter, Reagan and Clinton each owned one of his rockers. Ray Charles once touched a Maloof chair and declared it had "soul." He received countless awards, including a MacArthur Foundation "genius grant" and designation as a Living Treasure of California, but was always humble. "I just do what I do," he said.

His spirit and legacy live on at the Sam and Alfreda Maloof Foundation for Arts and Crafts, the spectacular six-acre

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compound where he resided with his second wife, Beverly, and worked daily in his studio. The heart of the property is the rambling redwood house he built and shared with the late Alfreda, his first wife. Filled with his handmade details and splendid collections of art and craft, it is a National Historic Landmark, open to the public for tours (maloof foundation.org).

John "Jack" Prip, 86, a silversmith whose classic functional designs combined European technical mastery with American inventiveness, died April 9. Born in New York in 1922 to a Danish father and American mother, Prip grew up in Denmark and apprenticed in his family's silver factory. At 26 he returned to the U.S. to teach at the School for American Craftsmen in Rochester, and later co-owned Shop One, an early retail outlet for fine contemporary craft, with Tage Frid, Ronald Hayes Pearson and Frans Wildenhain. As designer-in-residence at Reed & Barton in the 1950s, he created popular lines of flatware and serving pieces in the modernist style. From 1960 to 1981 he taught at the Rhode Island School of Design. Prip was a Fellow of the American Craft Council and in 1992 received the organization's highest honor, the Gold Medal.

Harry Dennis, 80, founding publisher of *American Ceramics,* died April 27 in New York City after a brief illness. A specialist in craft and design, Dennis started the magazine in 1982, having sensed the need for a critical forum devoted to ceramic art. It has documented the field ever since, presenting leading artists and distinguished writers in an elegant, award-winning design format.—J.L.

NY / Brooklyn
4 Brooklyn Museum
Yinka Shonibare MBE
to Sept. 20
brooklynmuseum.org
Life and art merge as Shonibare mixes media, emphasizing Dutch trade textiles sold in Africa, to confront the issues of wealth, privilege, race and class.

NY / Corning
Corning Museum of Glass
Masters of Studio Glass: Richard Craig Meitner
to Oct. 18
cmog.org
Witty and poetic, Meitner's eccentric glass objects often incorporate assorted matter such as rust, enamel, bronze, tile, paint and print.

NC / Penland
Penland Gallery
Delicate Beauty
to Sept. 20
penland.org
The interplay of raw and unlikely materials with precious metal and stones results in exceptional jewelry by artists affiliated with Penland School of Crafts.

OH / Athens
Dairy Barn Arts Center
Quilt National 2009
to Sept. 7
dairybarn.org
The 85 quilts in this juried exhibition run the gamut from traditional formats to 3-D textile sculpture, realism to abstraction.

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Photo/© Yinka Shonibare.



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Preview

Experimentalist

San Francisco Museum of Craft + Design
Fred Ball Enamels
San Francisco, California
July 24 – October 4, 2009
sfmcd.com

The inventive spirit of Fred Uhl Ball (1945–1985), one of the great innovators in the field of 20th-century enameling—the art of fusing glass to metal—is celebrated in this exhibition organized on the occasion of the Enamelist Society's biennial conference in Oakland. The son of two artists—the noted ceramist and educator Carleton Ball and the graphic artist and enamelist Kathryn Uhl Ball—Fred Ball found his way to art, and especially enamels, as a child, and was participating in shows and winning awards by the time he was in his early teens. Ball's career spanned 26 years, beginning when he was 14, and ending with his untimely death at 40, from injuries he suffered during a mugging. For much of that time his work was characterized by intense experimentation. This exhibition, curated by Hal Nelson and Bernard Jazzar, whose recent traveling survey, "Painting with Fire," included Ball's work, presents a selection of the artist's most experimental pieces produced between 1970 and 1985.

Ball's techniques included torch firing, metal collage, exploration of firescale (the burnt areas enamelists usually try to avoid) and the use of liquid enamel materials. He is among those credited with transforming enameling from its traditional association with small size and preciousness, to a larger, sometimes epic scale consistent with postwar painting and sculpture. He spread the word in *Experimental Techniques in Enameling* (1972), the first technical book to advocate such an approach to enameling, and it influenced a generation of young makers in the field to liberate their practices and stimulate their imaginations.

From the late 1970s on Ball took on a number of public commissions for Sacramento, his hometown, of which the most famous is *The Way Home,* one of the largest murals ever created in enamel on copper. Based on aerial views of the city, it comprises 1,488 individual tiles, each 12 by 12 inches, on a 6-by-62-foot installation on the wall of a parking garage. At the time of his death, at the peak of his career, Ball was working on a mural for a local hospital.

But even as he focused on commissioned work, Ball continued his artistic explorations on smaller-scale pieces, and these enamel-on-copper panels are highlighted in this show. Ball embraces collage in an untitled 1985 gold-colored work ❶, and bold rhythmic graphics, in *Jukebox Boogie,* 1974, with its jigsaw puzzle-like composition, and the use of ordinary objects as a source for form in *Pillow,* ca. 1970s ❷. *Two Gold Sea Scrolls,* 1976–77, has a Klimt-like richness. In such works, wielding enamels like an abstract expressionist, Ball combined his unorthodox techniques with refined craftsmanship, steadily expanding the boundaries of his medium. His works are not at all out of place in the 21st century. —B.S.



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OH / Portsmouth
❺ Southern Ohio Museum
Let Them Make Cake
Sept. 1–Oct. 30
somacc.com
An artful display of deftly crafted visual treats, such as Kristen Cliffel's *Say I Do,* highlights the museum's 30th birthday blowout.

PA / Harrisburg
State Museum of Pennsylvania
Art of the State: Pennsylvania 2009
to Sept. 20
statemuseumpa.org
Talented artists from the Keystone State generate functional or decorative craft using any natural or synthetic medium in this 42nd annual exhibition.

Italy / Faenza
International Museum of Ceramics
56th Premio Faenza
to Sept. 20
racine.ra.it/micfaenza
Artists no older than 40 signal new orientations of ceramics in this benchmark juried exhibition that became an international event in 1963.

Wales / Ruthin
Ruthin Craft Centre
Duckworth at Ninety
to Sept. 6
ruthincraftcentre.org.uk
The centre celebrates the serenely elegant and thought-provoking ceramics of an extraordinary talent, sculptor Ruth Duckworth.

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Product Placement

Beehive Co-op

Several years ago, Petra Geiger was living in Atlanta and struggling to find the right sales outlets for her handbags and stationery. Many other designers in the area, she realized, were in the same boat.

In 2004 she got a group of them together and founded Beehive Co-op. They launched a store, a sleek contemporary bazaar where some 50 members showcase their stylish handmade clothing, home accessories and jewelry, such as Olaria Studio's Chatham ceramic necklace ❶. Geiger, 41, recently moved to Mt. Kisco, New York, and opened a Beehive branch there. North and south, the merchandise is high-quality yet affordable. "Our goal is to make craft and design more accessible," she says. "I want people to fall in love with something, and be able to buy it."

With both stores getting good buzz, Geiger plans to build Beehive into a national brand with an online shop and franchise locations around the country–all with a consistently "fresh, polished, modern" presentation, each reflecting its own distinctive regional flavor. "The word 'franchise' has cookie-cutter connotations. That's not what we're about," she says. "Local by design" is a concept she's convinced can succeed anywhere.

Collaboration is the basis of Beehive's business model. Customers get to buy local goods directly from the source. Designers grow their businesses by pooling resources; working in the store, they enjoy what Geiger describes as "a sense of place, of not being isolated in their studios."

"The best thing is the camaraderie. It's so nice to know I'm not the only one out there," says Heather Swanepoel, a maker of artisanal bath and body products. She adds, "The sales have been great, the exposure has been amazing. The Beehive name has clout now in Atlanta."

And the time may well be ripe for Beehive to blossom nationwide. Geiger happily reports that after months of limiting their purchases to gift items during the economic downturn, "people are starting to buy things for themselves again."—J.L.

beehiveco-op.com



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beehiveco-op.com



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Books

Tracing a Movement

Voices of Contemporary Glass: The Heineman Collection
By Tina Oldknow, contribution by Cristine Russell
The Corning Museum of Glass
Corning, New York
cmog.org

Hudson Hills Press
Manchester, Vermont
$85
hudsonhills.com

The Chicago philanthropist Ben W. Heineman Sr. purchased his first work of contemporary glass, a Harvey Littleton sculpture, in 1984, and was immediately hooked. For more than 20 years thereafter, Heineman and his wife, Natalie, continued to collect glass, with an emphasis on abstraction, ultimately assembling 240 objects, including Mary Shaffer's *Orange 26 MS037* ❷. The collection is a nearly complete chronology of the American studio glass movement, though it also includes international artists.

In 2006, the Heinemans donated their collection to the Corning Museum of Glass, where it is now on view through January 3, 2010. Rather than donate to a general art museum, as did a number of collectors of craft-related materials, the Heinemans were determined to see their treasures housed in an institution committed to the preservation, documentation and display of glass.

This handsome volume presenting the entire collection sheds light on the Heinemans' acquisition process and demonstrates the development of contemporary glass over more than three decades. Following Cristine Russell's biographical sketch of the Heinemans, Tina Oldknow, curator of modern glass at Corning, discusses Ben Heineman's approach to acquisition and his taste. This visual chronicle reflects the rapid rate at which the couple acquired, as well as their amassing of "subcollections" of pieces by particular artists, among them studio glass pioneers Mark Peiser, David Huchthausen, Dale Chihuly and Joel Philip Myers.

In the "Artists and Artworks" section, the heart of the book, the objects in the collection are shown along with portraits of the artists and quotations, "voices," often those of the artist but just as often those of curators, historians or art critics—all amounting to a stylish family album of the studio glass movement and those involved with this international phenomenon. Reflecting the high quality of the Heineman Collection and the commitment of the Corning Museum, this book will surely be a significant resource in unpacking this recent history.—B.S.






Above L to R: Brooch by Valerie Hector, Silver Tea Set by Alexandra Austin **Bottom:** Glass Stems by Dan Mirer

Council News

American Craft Council Conference:
Creating a New Craft Culture
October 15–17, 2009
Minneapolis, Minnesota

The Council will host an interactive conference, bringing together voices from within the field and beyond, to discuss craft's role in a changing world. The event, which will take place at the Radisson Plaza Hotel, will feature distinguished speakers such as Dr. Richard Sennett, professor of sociology at New York University and the London School of Economics and author of *The Craftsman;* Rob Walker, columnist for the *New York Times Magazine* and author of *Buying In: The Secret Dialogue Between What We Buy and Who We Are;* Garth Clark, curator, historian and gallerist; Sandra Alfoldy, associate professor of craft history at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; and Sonya Clark, chair of craft and material studies at Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Richmond. For complete information on the conference agenda, speakers and registration, visit craftcouncil.org/conference09.

Honoring the Best at St. Paul
At the Council's American Craft Show in St. Paul, Minnesota, held April 17–19, Awards of Excellence were presented to jeweler Devta Doolan of Portland, Maine; fiber artist Kelly Marshall of Minneapolis, Minnesota, who made *Pinwheel* ❶; and ceramists Ikuzi Teraki and Jeanne Bisson from Washington, Vermont. The top award for booth design went to Daniel Dunbar of Superior, Wisconsin, for his furniture display. Claire Selkurt, a design historian and an instructor in art history at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, was the guest juror. View work by all of the show winners at americancraftmag.org.

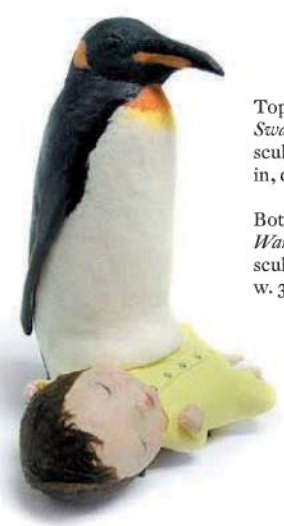

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While Kyoko Okubo works in a medium that represents Japanese traditions, her sculptures provide a visual landscape entirely her own—a place of animals, gentle young girls and nuanced relationships.

Paper Narratives

STORY BY
Scott Rothstein





Top:
Swan Head, washi paper sculpture {h. 3 in, w. 3 in, d. 1 in}.

Bottom:
Warm Sleep, washi paper sculpture {h. 4¼ in, w. 3½ in, d. 2 in}.

Kyoko Okubo calls herself a doll maker. Yet, upon closer inspection, one sees that this extremely private Japanese artist is much more than that. Her tiny sculptures are meticulously crafted from washi, the traditional paper of Japan. This crisp, sturdy material, which is created from fibers from the bark of the gampi tree, the mitsumata shrub or the paper mulberry, is much more than useful object. Washi–which means "Japanese paper"–represents traditions handed down from generation to generation. And while today the material is often mass-produced, it is still handmade in rural communities throughout the country.

Okubo began playing with washi as a child. It was a hobby, not a career. Then 12 years ago Okubo, now in her mid-30s and living in Tokyo, began making dolls. Her pieces, usually women or lifelike animals, are no more than 12 inches high. She presents what is familiar, only to surprise the viewer with an inexplicable element in the work. A kangaroo stands quietly while being lassoed by a young woman. A black crow wears a headdress in the shape of a swan's head. Okubo's sculptures are aligned with the maternal. Her most powerful works suggest a bond between a girl and an animal–expressing a moment of attachment captured as if by a camera lens.

Initially crafting her sculptures as private explorations, Okubo intended these curious figures for an audience of one–herself. Her motivation was to represent through physical objects her most personal feelings. Later, she began to show these efforts to family and close friends, and eventually shared this vision with others. Yet the art world in Japan is a rigid and formal one, with few possibilities for a self-trained artist. Faced with limited options, Okubo took her work to Tokyo's Harajuku district. On a piece of fabric on a sidewalk, she had her first one-woman exhibition. She immediately had a following.

That following now reaches far beyond Harajuku. In addition to a two-person show at Mobilia Gallery in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 2007, she has participated in the gallery's theme exhibitions, crafting a conceptual teapot made of paper for "The Teapot Redefined" and a paper goblet for "The Goblet Redefined" shows. The Museum of Arts and Design acquired the latter for its permanent collection. Mobilia's support of Okubo's career continues; they showed her work at SOFA New York this year.

No one is more surprised about her transition from the streets into galleries and museums than Okubo herself. Expressing her intimate emotions was a huge risk, and she is moved that so many have embraced her. This reaction may be even more shocking given Japan's past. Historically, the feminine voice has not been present in Japanese fine art. Even today, many Japanese women sculpt and paint in the aggressive, masculine manner of their male colleagues. Artists such as Takashi Murakami and Yoshitomo Nara have influenced a generation of young Japanese artists in style and content. Intentionally childlike, manga-inspired or playfully combative, this art represents a particular point of view. Yet the range of such work is limited and there is more to the Japanese experience.

Okubo was not afraid to reach beyond this, possibly because she did not start out creating work for others to view. While at first glance her work may seem similarly childlike, it was not done from a child's point of view. Her sculptures provide a visual landscape entirely her own–a place of animals, young girls and nuanced relationships. Responding to her emotions, Kyoko Okubo has shaped a collection that is profoundly personal and visually compelling.

Scott Rothstein is a fiber artist who has lived in Asia for 12 years.

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mobilia-gallery.com/artists/kok
artfoundout.blogspot.com



Top:
Girl Being Kissed, washi paper sculpture {h. 7 in, w. 5 in, d. 3 in}.

Bottom:
Rocking Horse, washi paper sculpture {h. 4½ in, w. 8 in, d. 5 in}.





Okubo's Simple Process

1) Make the frame with wire.
2) Fill the frame with thin paper and then fix the body with glue.
3) Cover the body with pieces of Japanese paper (washi).
4) Add layers.
5) Create details.
6) Finish the surface with varnish.



Right:
Mathias Bengtsson
03 Slice Lounge Chair, 1999, aluminum {h. 29½ in, w. 35⅛ in, d. 26¾ in}.

Made in Europe

STORY BY
Christopher Lloyd

Indianapolis Museum of Art
European Design Since 1985: Shaping the New Century
March 8 – June 21, 2009
Indianapolis, Indiana
imamuseum.org



Right:
Radi Designers
Whippet Bench, 1998, polyurethane paper {h. 23⅝ in, w. 55⅛ in, d. 28¾ in}.

"European Design Since 1985: Shaping the New Century," organized by the Indianapolis Museum of Art in association with the Denver Art Museum, is the rare exhibition with the potential to fascinate both serious art experts and casual museumgoers. With more than 250 pieces covering a broad range of furniture, sculpture, metalwork and mass-produced items, the show is one of the first major retrospectives of contemporary Western European industrial and decorative design. But with its eclectic, often whimsical juxtaposition of fine art objects with everyday products, it's bound to draw a smile from even unsophisticated visitors.

More than five years of work on the project by R. Craig Miller, the IMA's curator of design arts, culminated with a two-day symposium March 6–7 that drew some of the top names in contemporary European design. Speakers included design company heads Alberto Alessi of the Italian Alessi SpA and Rolf Fehlbaum of Swiss Vitra, as well as notable designers like Eero Koivisto of Sweden and France's Matali Crasset. Keynote speaker Michele De Lucchi of Italy, founder of Produzione Privata, set the tone, urging that we recognize the role of design in everyday life. "More and more, the house where we live is the theater of our own personality," he said.

That notion plays out in the exhibition's serpentine layout, which takes viewers past objects they might well have in their own homes–consumer items produced on a mass scale that they might not otherwise regard as art as well as nonfunctional works with little utility beyond aesthetics.

The journey hurls the viewer between modernist and postmodernist traditions, which occasionally results in jarring juxtapositions. For example, it's a breathtaking transition to move from the Expressive Design section, with its highly stylized furniture that would be impossible to sit on, to the spare functionalism of Geometric Minimal Design, typified by dinnerware settings and sleek chairs.

In all, the exhibition is divided into eight sections, with many pieces gathered from unexpected sources, but also many examples by name designers such as De Lucchi, Philippe Starck, Ron Arad, Jasper Morrison and Marc Newson. The Decorative Design section picks up the waning thread of design groups Alchymia and Memphis–traditional luxury objects approached as art. One can

The exhibit's serpentine layout takes viewers past objects they might very well have in their own homes, as well as nonfunctional works with little utility beyond aesthetics.

Below left:
Marc Newson
Orgone (POD Edition) Chair, 1993, aluminum {h. 37⅞ in, w. 31⅞ in, d. 7¾ in}.

Below middle:
Jasper Morrison
Plywood Side Chair, 1988, plywood and metal {h. 35 in, w. 15½ in, d. 18¾ in}.

Below:
Maarten Baas
Your Best Kitchen Mate Knife Block, 2004, limewood {h. 14⅝ in, w. 8¼ in, d. 9⅞ in}.







Newson Photo/Marc Newson Ltd., Morrison Photo/Hans Hansen, © Vitra, Baas Photo/Ivan Terestchenko.

sense this fondness for ornamentation in the Luigi I Chandelier, 1989, by Bořek Šípek, with its twisted bloom of colorful glass and brass.

Perhaps no piece better illustrates the valuation of form over function in the Expressive Design section better than Mathias Bentsson's Slice Chair, 1999. With its horizontal aluminum slabs combining to create undulating waves of pure roving shape, it's an arresting blend of industrialism and organic fluidity. Similarly, Zaha Hadid's Vortexx Chandelier, 2005, offers more aesthetic than actual illumination, with its sinuous spiral of fiberglass and acrylic. And so imposing is the steel swirl of the This Mortal Coil Bookshelf, 1993, by Ron Arad, it practically dares one to place any books upon it.

The contrasting utilitarian nature of the objects in Geometric Minimal Design is demonstrated by the Jasper Morrison Toaster, 2004, with the sleek spareness of an iPod. De Lucchi's Tolomeo Table Lamp, 1986, brings an iconic futurism to the tabletop in its bold lines and tension-bound arms.

Marc Newson has several pieces in the Biomorphic Design section that reflect a whimsical approach, such as his 1997 neon-orange Dish Doctor Dish Rack. His 1986 Lockheed Chaise Longue is a masterstroke in aluminum, with its luxuriant sweeping form covered in aerodynamic squares of metal and rivets. Indeed, no section has more surprising juxtapositions than Biomorphic Design, where one can admire finely crafted vases, walk a few paces and be looking at plastic gasoline cans by Stefan Lindfors or pruning shears by Olavi Lindén. It segues discreetly into the Neo-Pop Design section, typified by playful, highly colorful designs in mass-produced items like Nokia cell phones, Swatch watches and James Dyson's DCII vacuum cleaner, 2003.

Conceptual Design elevates concept over both form and function, so no unifying stylistic theme can be discerned here. Tejo Remy employs the found-object aesthetic with his 1991 pieces Rag Chair, using a disparate bundle of colored cloth held together with steel straps, and Milk Bottle Lamp, with glass-and-steel bottles hanging from ceiling almost to floor. As one might expect, playfulness takes center stage in the Neo-Dada/Surreal Design area, perhaps best personified by Denis Santachiara's Cirro Hanging Lamp, 2002. This Dacron wonder slowly undulates in a transfixing yet calming dance–it's like having one's own personal cloud. The whimsy is ratcheted up by the Radi Designers' Whippet Bench, 1998, in which the canine silhouette gives form to the polyurethane and paper bench, and Maarten Baas's Your Best Kitchen Mate! Knife Block, 2004, a carved limewood human head pierced with sharp knives.

Neo-Decorative Design, the final section, features mostly tableware and chairs launched from historical forms. Tord Boontje's Garland Hanging Light, 2002, stands out, an intricate bouquet of flower shapes cut from steel and wound around a lightbulb, to subtle yet stunning effect. Given its similarity in theme and medium to the Decorative Design section, the Neo-Decorative Design collection is meant to bring the retrospective full circle. But after the bold extravagance of the surrealist and conceptual designs, it risks the danger of ending the journey on a staid note.

Still, in such a trek through the disparate innovations of contemporary European design, there were bound to be some dizzying transitions. This show puts the Indianapolis Museum of Art on the map of serious institutions approaching design as art.

Christopher Lloyd is a freelance journalist and film critic in Indianapolis.

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The exhibition tours to the High Museum of Art, Atlanta (January 23 – April 25, 2010), and other venues. The catalog, is $45 softback, $65 hardback, imamuseum.org.

Right:
Gandi del Sur, 2008, detail, mixed-media installation, video and music {h. 80 in, w. 24 in, d. 20 in}.

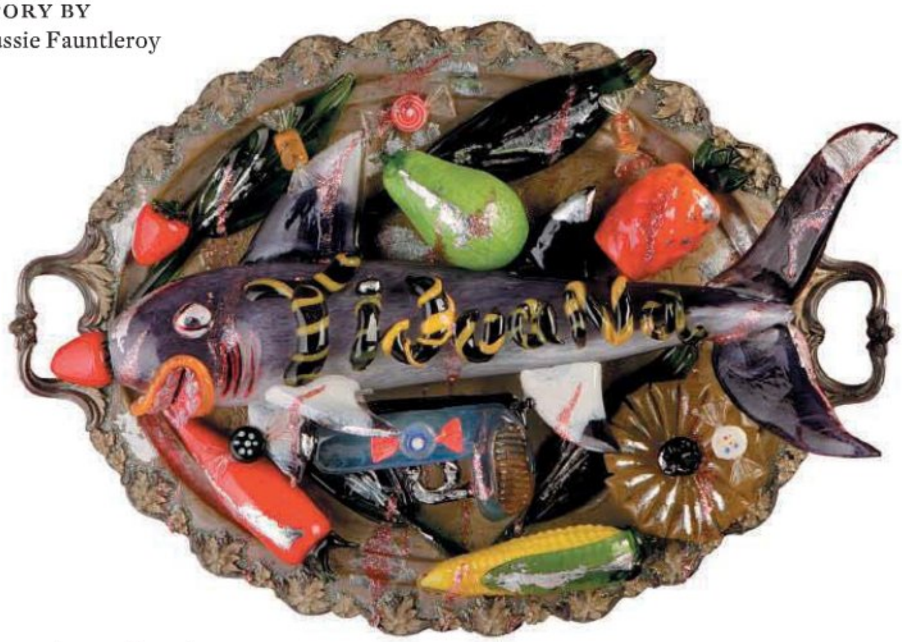
Below:
Tijuana on a Silver Platter, 2005, blown glass, mixed media {h. 18½ in, w. 27 in, d. 8 in}.



de la Torre Brothers and Border Baroque

Museum at the National Hispanic Cultural Center
Meso-Americhanics
(Maneuvering Mestizaje)
September 12, 2008 – August 16, 2009
Albuquerque, New Mexico
nhccnm.org

STORY BY
Gussie Fauntleroy



If ever there were a case where materials and their masterful use provide a perfect match—and metaphor—for an artist's concepts and themes, it's in the art of Jamex and Einar de la Torre. How better to convey the rich complexity and alchemic intermingling of border cultures than through mixed-media creations as multilayered, thought-provoking and engaging as the cultures themselves? "Meso-Americhanics (Maneuvering Mestizaje): de la Torre brothers and Border Baroque" brings such work to the Museum at the National Hispanic Cultural Center in an extensive exhibition put together by the museum's director and chief curator, Tey Marianna Nunn.

Jamex and Einar de la Torre were born (1960 and 1963, respectively) in Guadalajara, Mexico, finished high school in Southern California and studied sculpture and glassblowing at California State University in Long Beach. They currently divide their time between Ensenada, Mexico, and National City, California, working with equal creative fluency on both sides of the border, as well as pulling iconic imagery and ideas from around the world.

Similarly, in their art the brothers intentionally disregard conventional borders between dichotomous pairs such as "high" and "low" art and sacred and profane, and between deluxe objects and the detritus of everyday life. Virtually every assemblage and installation incorporates blown glass or cast-resin elements in sumptuous colors that shimmer, juxtaposed with an array of found objects, including plastic toys, snack food wrappers and old tires.

Messages presented through this juxtaposition are absorbed on a visceral as well as intellectual level. Just as an unfamiliar culture may initially feel like an undifferentiated sensory barrage of sounds, colors, textures and smells, these works take time to reveal their multiple layers. Each piece brims, in truly baroque fashion, with historical and cultural references, as well as universal themes, unsettling nuances and elements of sheer beauty. Detailed descriptions mounted beside each work and a catalog provide welcome insight.

The de la Torre brothers don't consider themselves glass artists per se. Instead, they see glass as one component of a rich visual language in which the qualities of glass—color, malleability and light—interact with a multitude of found objects. The brothers

might more accurately be described as three-dimensional collage artists. The act of combining glass with other materials gives them an agile means for addressing issues of current relevance, particularly those arising from the flow of humanity across borders around the world.

Central among these is the question of identity. Who are we when removed from the solid ground of a single ethnic background and history-infused sense of place? The Spanish word describing this condition is *mestizo,* which means mixture. In a graphically striking piece, *Mestizaje Defined,* 2005 (and in other works in the show), the brothers use mixtures of beans as symbols for the mestizo state. A clear, cast-resin frame contains 12 identically shaped low-relief faces, each filled with a different blend of beans.

Some faces contain predominantly dark or light-colored beans. Some are homogeneous, others, highly mixed. "In the end, we're all beaners; we're all mestizo. It's a cause for celebration," the artists declare. Yet with the bean-filled faces all bearing variations on a grin, the piece posits a surface cheerfulness for situations we know in reality to be fraught with issues of social hierarchy, privilege and discrimination.

Other themes running through the de la Torre brothers' work include historical perspective—who has the right to write history?—conquest, assimilation, sacrifice (part of a larger theme of pre-Columbian cultures and influences), religion, food, fate and the nature of time. One large wall piece, *Poca HantaVirus,* 2008, literally superimposes divergent views of cultural interface. Onto the surface of a massive and sternly intense representation of an Olmec mask is projected the animated Disney film *Pocahontas.* In the film, floppy animal ears and flowing dark hair represent the candy-flavored, Euro-centered (Americanized) vision of encounter. Meanwhile, the mask projects its own indisputable force, offering the viewer a disquieting firsthand encounter with the "other."

By contrast, the show's entrance piece, *Eastern Medicine,* 2008, uses the arresting appeal of color, symmetry, symbolism and detail in cast resin and blown glass to highlight other global connections—in this case, between Native American and Asian cultures. The work features the circle, as symbolic of endless cyclical time, and food, as

The de la Torre brothers combine glass with other materials as a means of addressing issues of identity.

central to human vitality, community and social structures. Corn, which plays this role among indigenous peoples of the Americas, is depicted and to represent Asian cultures there are small plates of (glass) mock food resembling the plastic models displayed in the windows of Japanese restaurants and shops. On a grander scale, *Colonial Atmosphere,* 2002, a room-size installation that also includes an Olmec mask, draws associations between the moon landing, religion and Western Hemisphere conquest. Yet small works such as *Crossing the Desert,* 2005, pack an equally powerful, if more direct, punch.

"Meso-Americhanics" may be overwhelming—best experienced in more than one viewing—as is the National Hispanic Cultural Center itself, with its art museum and visual arts program, performing arts, films, lectures, literary events and more.

Gussie Fauntleroy is a writer and editor in Denver, Colorado.

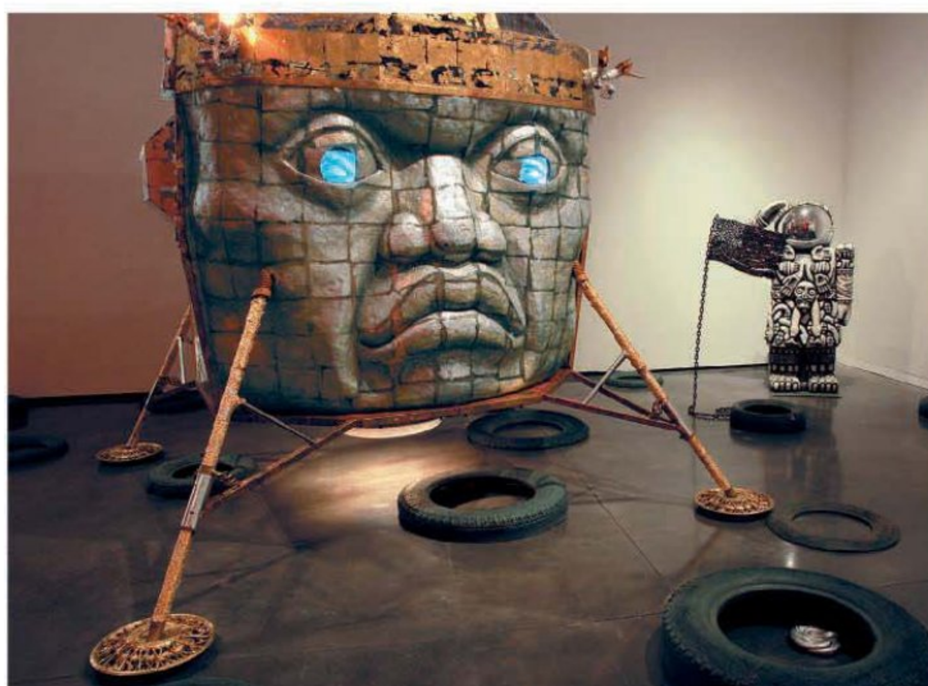
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The bilingual catalog is $22, nhccnm.org.



Right:
De Pilar of Empire/M. Pyre, 2004, mixed-media installation {h. 80 in, w. 24 in, d. 20 in}.

Below:
Colonial Atmosphere, 2002, mixed-media installation.



Photos/Courtesy of Koplin del Rio Gallery.

CRAFT'S HORIZONS

With this issue we introduce Considering..., a column shared by Glenn Adamson, who kicks off here, and Akiko Busch, whose first essay will appear in the October/November 2009 issue.

STORY BY
Glenn Adamson

The skilled work that we call craft comes at you from all directions. But sometimes it's hard to know exactly what path it took.

For example, I was in Istanbul recently and met a jeweler named Sevan Biçakçi . His signature pieces are enormous rings set with semiprecious stones like tourmaline and topaz. The gems are carved from underneath, so once mounted they have the appearance of wearable magic tricks. Biçakçi is a master goldsmith, and each piece seems at first to be the obsessively worked masterpiece of a genius. But his jewelry is really made by a team of 40 or so skilled locals, each of whom takes on one task within a seamlessly organized production line.

Or take contemporary art, where the trend is increasingly towards outsourced, highly skilled labor. Damien Hirst's iconic diamond-encrusted platinum skull, *For the Love of God,* is an obvious example. It was made by the Bond Street firm Bentley and Skinner. Roni Horn's recent retrospective at Tate Modern featured *Pink Tons,* a huge cracked and rippled block of glass that looks like an enormous chunk of frozen rosewater. It was manufactured for her by the German firm Schott. At the Art Institute of Chicago's newly opened wing for modern and contemporary art, meanwhile, you can view *Hinoki,* an exact replica of a fallen tree that the artist Charles Ray saw in California. It was fashioned by a team of woodcarvers in Osaka. In all of these cases, the people who made the art go largely unmentioned.

How about industry? You might think craft is the opposite of mass production, but in fact artisans work at factories across the globe. They make prototypes out of clay and plaster, keep creaky and outdated machines running, or carry out the same highly skilled but repetitive work day after day, for wages most Americans would consider exploitative. Again, their names are typically effaced within systems of design and distribution, but without these craftspeople the global economy would be in even more trouble than it already is.

Contrary to expectation, then, making something by hand is not a secure form of authorship. Quite the contrary, in fact: craft is easily rendered the silent supplement to other disciplines. This is infuriating to traditionalists, who value responsibility to one's work and oneself above all. But the role of skill in contemporary life is big, messy and complicated. An old British term, "applied art," captures this reality nicely. Craft skill today is usually "applied" indirectly, within increasingly elaborate and interconnected networks of production, exchange and consumption.

All this spells trouble for the studio craft movement, in which single makers produce unique objects as a way of expressing their own aesthetic. Giving up on this once-vital approach to craft will be a painful process. But the time has come. Too much of craft production offers itself as an alternative to the vertiginous challenges of the present. Such headline events as SOFA (in New York, Chicago and now Santa Fe) and Collect (in London) are still important, but they feel increasingly outdated, stuck in a modernist, formalist conception of value. As long as the craft community considers its goals to be the creation of autonomous and rarefied *objets d'art,* it will remain trapped in a retrograde exercise.

I'm a historian by profession, but what I hope to do in this regular column is to look at craft's present and possible future: craft's horizons. I use the phrase advisedly, of course. Especially in its incarnation under its editor Rose Slivka, between 1959 and 1979, this publication's precursor, *Craft Horizons,* was restless, intellectually engaged and globetrotting. It was not a perfect magazine, but it brought its readers into areas that many of them would have preferred to ignore: the luxury economy, the fine art gallery, the factory floor, the poverty-stricken village. Modern craft history has moved on since then, of course, but all of these contexts (and new ones too) are still vital for us to understand.

So in this column, I'll be looking at craft skill in action: on television, in couture, in the hands of architects, within tourist trade. Not all of these stories will be uplifting ones. Yet at a moment when many studio craftspeople and their advocates feel a sense of crisis, I want to sound a note of optimism. The sense of mission once shared by a certain range of practitioners has been lost. But for precisely that reason, craft has never seemed more exciting. The moment calls for critical inquiry rather than idealistic celebration. Forty-five years ago, at the First World Congress of Craftsmen, during which the World Crafts Council was formed, Slivka addressed herself to this question, and her words, from the published proceedings, still ring true: "Today the craftsman is expressing for all men the dilemma of man in a mechanized civilization. He is affirming that man has prevailed not by his physical strength, but by his calculation in weakness... not because he could win, but because he could lose and not perish, because he could suffer and still not only be, but continue to be, in a state of becoming." Craft is always on the move. ✚

Glenn Adamson is head of graduate studies at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and co-editor of the Journal of Modern Craft.





Contrary to expectation, making something by hand is not a secure form of authorship.



Clockwise from top right:

Sevan Biçakçi
Fountain, gold, silver, topaz.

Roni Horn
Pink Tons, 2008, glass.

Charles Ray
Hinoki, 2007
Japanese Cypress.

Horn photo/Peter Macdiarmid/Getty Images; Ray photo/Joshua White, courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles © Charles Ray.

NOT EVERY-THING IS BLACK AND WHITE

STORY BY
Andrea DiNoto

Opposite: *Arc,* Texture Monoprint Vessel, 2008, one of Kathy Erteman's wheel-thrown and altered whiteware pieces {h. 8 in, w. 23 in, d. 6 in}.



Photo/James Dee.

It's a cool day in early spring, and Kathy Erteman is standing in her light-filled New York studio pondering a low, oval ceramic vessel. The undulating sides suggest a Serra-esque sculptural monumentality, while the›

Throughout her career, Erteman has steadily maintained her studio work, which she sees as bridging the worlds of design (planned, intentional) and craft (spontaneous, material driven).



textured outer glaze presents a crusty, expressionist chiaroscuro. An example of Erteman's new work, such a piece, she explains, begins life in a fairly usual manner. She throws a form on the wheel, then "I pick it up at a certain time and stretch it, guide it into the basic shape, then take a look at what the clay wants to do, and we strike a compromise." A slab bottom is created, and the interior is given a black matte glaze. Most arresting is the vessel's decidedly modernist surface: multiple firings, the application of a variety of slips, glazes and surfactants, and finally the graphic technique of monoprinting, all conspire in the creation of the painterly result, albeit one that no mere painter could reproduce. Reflecting on the piece, Erteman comments: "There's some chance and risk in it. It's what I like, what I'm interested in right now."

The painter Robert Kushner exclaims over this new direction in Erteman's work : "It's so rich and unique I can't stand it!" Kushner has collected Erteman's pieces for years and has been encouraging her "sense of discovery." The results can be seen not only in Erteman's vessels, but in a series of wall pieces in two distinct forms: flat panels in the mode of Japanese sectional screen painting, and sets of modular, three-dimensional forms–one a boxlike group of six-inch squares, another an arrangement of small cushion shapes–designed to be mounted as multiples in a grid to Erteman's specifications. She has also been producing works on mulberry paper, whose fibrous texture reminds her of clay. Using tempera and gouache, she is creating black and white images that relate to her ceramic surfaces, but, she says, "now I understand the decisions painters talk about. When you're working, you're working directly. There's not the chance to pause as with clay."

Erteman began to work in this mode around 2005, diverging from the type of bold, functional vessels for which she is well known: vases, bowls and teapots with carved sgrafitto-like black and white surface treatments, typically geometrical motifs that ▸

Pottery on the Tibetan Plateau

When Kathy Ertemann arrived at a village in the Tibetan Autonomous Region in Yunnan, China, as a consultant through the auspices of Aid to Artisans/ Mountain Institute/ USAID, for a two-week sojourn in 2007 with local potters, who hand-built their Nixi black earthenware the way it has been done for 2000 years, she first just watched. "I couldn't tell how pieces were made," ▸







Opposite: *Rust,* 2009, detail, wall square installation of glazed whiteware {h. 18 in, w. 21 in, d. 2 in}, one of Erteman's modular wall pieces.

Above: *Duet,* set of carved nested bowls with slip and glaze, designed in 1998 for Tiffany's {h. 7 in, w. 20 in, and h. 6 in, w. 15 in}.







Duet photo/James Dee.

Below: *OpenStock Nesting Bowls,* 2000-2004, slip-cast, hand-carved stoneware {largest h. 2 in, w. 14 in}, from a collection that Erteman designed and produced in Peru.

Right: *Painted Boat,* 2005, handbuilt white-ware, with layered slips and glazes {h. 3½ in, w. 24 in, d. 10 in}.



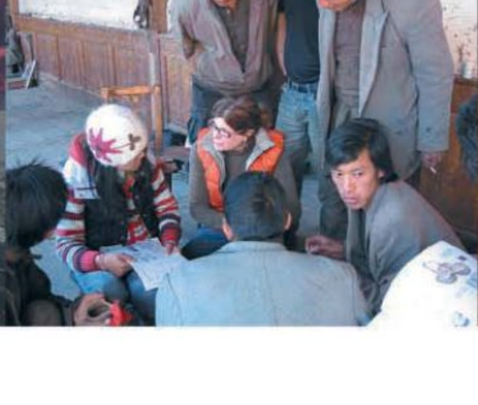


have the look of brushstrokes. "Before they were fired," Erteman explains, "I would coat them with black clay slip, then carve the surfaces very spontaneously." Each piece was finished with several layers of satin matte glaze to impart an elegant sheen in the final firing. But, at a certain point, Erteman felt she had fully explored this approach and began to seek new ways of working the surfaces. "Instead of carving," she says, "I began adding layers of slip and resists, building up, sanding back and scumbling. I didn't exactly know what I was after, only that I wanted a deeper, richer surface." As well, she wanted to carry forward the iconography of circles and lines she had developed for the carved work. This led to experiments with monoprinting—a traditional technique in which images are transferred from one paper surface to another. Working first with an oversize platter form, Erteman used paper painted with slip to print dots and other forms on the surface. She also devised a unique method for using clay itself as the transfer medium because, as she explains, "I could apply texture to the clay and cut out shapes very easily." She went on to use the technique on new forms, including tall, cylindrical, slip-cast vases that can reach gravity-defying heights. The graphic treatments can sometimes be viewed as linear abstract landscapes, or in the case of the platters, visionary aerial views that Erteman has come to associate with her own subconscious interpretations of Aboriginal dot paintings. The slab wall pieces, with their groupings of abstract black forms, suggest familial relationships, while the grid modules—each one different in glaze and texture—demonstrate how effectively an assemblage of purely ceramic identities can function within a minimalist geometry.

Ward Mintz, an independent curator and collector who owns and treasures several of Erteman's carved pieces, finds himself "drawn to Kathy's strong modernist impulse." He adds: "Some of her glazes remind me that she's an heir to a California ceramic tradition that I associate with the great duo Otto and Gertrud Natzler."

Although Erteman does indeed boast California roots, she is of Dutch and Viennese heritage. Erteman's mother was a fashion designer and commercial artist, while her father inherited artworks from uncles who were art collectors in Amsterdam. The Natzler name was an oft-repeated mantra in her home. "When I was very young," says Erteman, "I saw photos of the Natzlers working in their modern home studio. I thought 'That's how I want to live.'"

Erteman came of age as a potter in the 1970s during the ferment of California's ceramic revolution, whose avatars—Peter Voulkos, Robert Arneson and others—were declaring the functional vessel DOA. "In my 20s in school in the Bay Area," says Erteman, "you weren't even allowed to make functional pots." But that point of view didn't resonate with her. "I saw things as either sculpture or functional pots, and sculpture could be made out of any material," she says. "It didn't need to be clay." Erteman committed herself to the vessel form and has pursued functional, well-designed ceramics throughout her 30-year career. At times she has felt herself pigeonholed as a "designer," perhaps because her stylish pots were sold›




Erteman's New York studio, 2008, with work in progress.





she says, so it was important that she had the skills of both a maker and a designer.

The potters, all men, made traditional items such as yak butter tea pitchers, vases and hot pots for cooking. In a local instance of recycling, the white decoration on some pots is created by inlaying fragments of factory-made porcelain bowls into the wet clay. Their pots are pit-fired with wood and sawdust up to 200 degrees Celsius.

"After observing methods of making for a week," Erteman says, "I was able to direct them to new designs using their traditional techniques." Her hope was that new designs would "appeal to the local Tibetan markets and tourists."

Among the new designs were condiment containers for chili oil and barley powder and



Left: *Bucket Vessel*, 2007, wheel-thrown and altered terra-cotta with slips and glaze {h. 7 in, w. 11 in, d. 9 in}.

Erteman's surface applications conspire in the creation of the painterly result, albeit one that no mere painter could reproduce.

at commercial outlets such as Barneys. Erteman also created a set of limited edition carved nested bowls for Tiffany's as part of a special marketing program for handmade objects in the manner of Louis Tiffany. She now designs tableware only on commission, or on a consultancy basis, as she did for Crate and Barrel, working with a factory in Thailand. Throughout her career, she has maintained her studio work, which she sees as bridging the worlds of design (planned, intentional) and craft (spontaneous, material driven).

Unlike, say, Betty Woodman, whose exuberant, brilliantly painted deconstructed vessels represent a paradigm of contemporary art-based ceramics, Erteman adheres to a rigorous purity of form, in which functionality, though retained, works as a transcendent concept. There is no pretension to sculpture, but the sensibility is there, nonetheless. The restraint Erteman shows in her work extends to her palette, long restricted to black and white and neutrals. Now touches of ochre and, more dramatically, a vivid Yves Klein blue are being used for some pieces. "I am a person not interested in blue at all," says Erteman, but "for some reason I was interested in that inky indigo as related to black."

Erteman's skills as a ceramist, along with her generosity of spirit, have led her into teaching—at Greenwich House Pottery, the Brooklyn Museum and as artist in residence at the American School in Singapore. In a project funded by USAID, she has also traveled to the Tibetan Autonomous Region in Yunnan, China, under the auspices of Aid to Artisans, an organization that helps connect artisans in emerging nations with their market. This project, operated in conjunction with the Mountain Institute, which supports mountain cultures worldwide, brought Erteman to the Tibetan plateau, where for two weeks she worked with local potters whose hand-built, pit-fired black Nixi pottery has been made the same way for 2,000 years. The object of the program was to help the potters—"They have no wheels and little electricity," explains Erteman—improve their wares for the new market of Chinese tourists who increasingly flood these formerly unreachable regions. Erteman taught them how to apply slip, make the pot lids fit better and keep the bottoms flat. She also conceived the idea for a new design based on the famous black and white agate dzi bead, which Tibetans revere for its believed amuletic properties. Erteman cut out paper templates for vases that delighted the potters, who could then hand-build them. The resemblance, in concept, to Erteman's early black and white carved pieces is undeniable, evidence perhaps that ceramic art, good design and art itself derive as much from organic, even intuitive, sources as from rationality and craft.

Andrea DiNoto is a New York-based writer on art, craft and design.

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Kathy Erteman's works will be on view at Greenwich House Pottery in New York City (October 5 – November 15) and the CAS Gallery of Kean University in Union, New Jersey (November 3 – December 27). KathyErteman.com.





objects such as incense holders and candleholders for domestic spiritual use. But what really resonated with the potters was Erteman's idea for a vase based on the dzi bead that Tibetans revere. "I learned that the potters were extremely receptive to new ideas and designs as long as they were Tibetan in spirit, that is, relevant to Tibetan culture in some way."

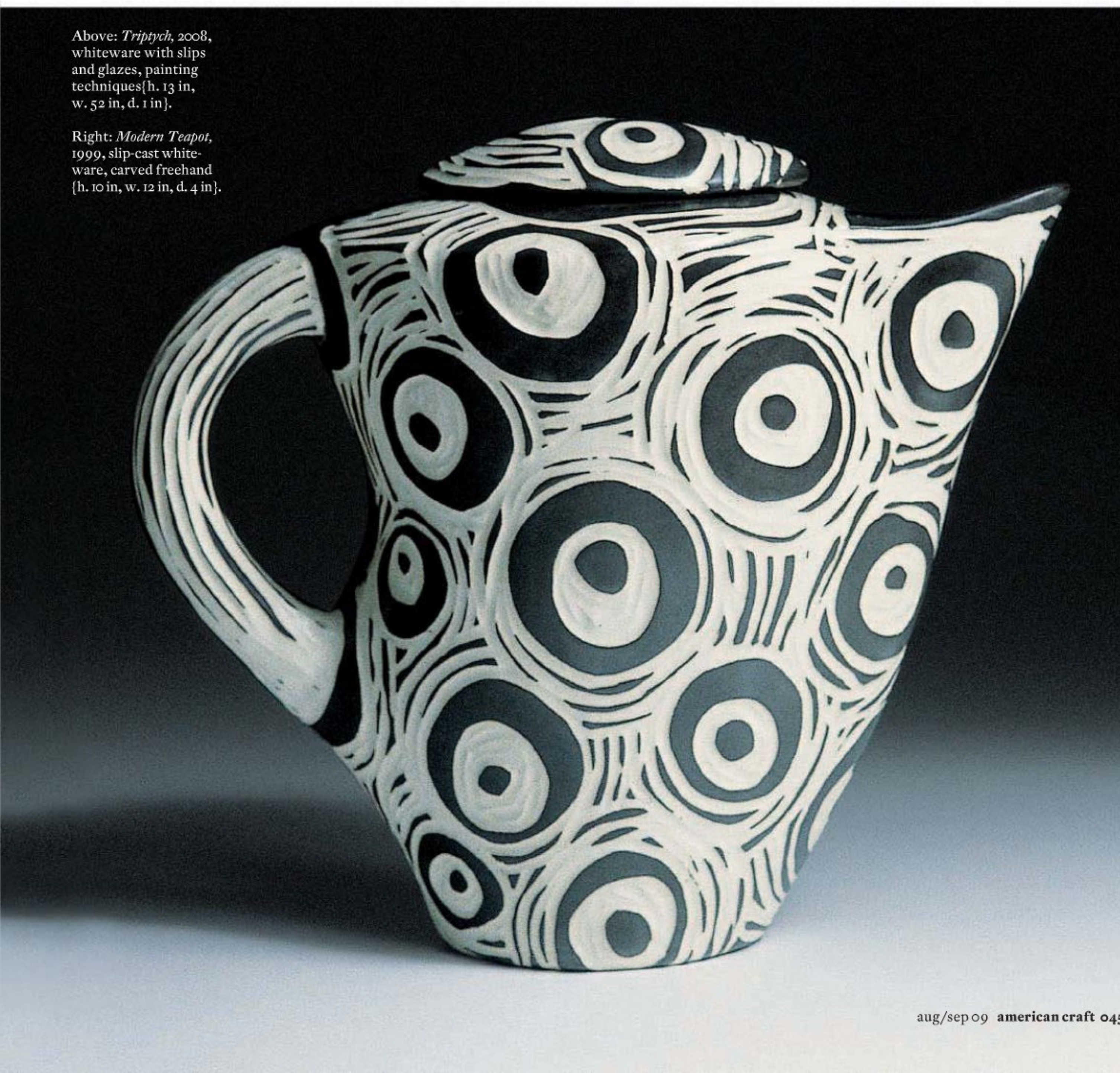
Gaining the potters' confidence so that she was invited to sit on their side of the bench, Erteman (in red vest) was also able to show them how to improve their craftsmanship, making lids that fit better and creating smoother surfaces and flat bottoms. Their pots were displayed and sold in a room next to the working studio.

Though Erteman had the services of a translator, Sunn Uo (woman with white hat), in many ways she found that communication was not a problem. "Craftsman to craftsman we understood each other. Our daily practice and how we saw the world was basically similar. Whether you're on the Tibetan Plateau or in New York City, we were all committed to the life of making ceramics. We were able to understand that without words." +



Above: *Triptych*, 2008, whiteware with slips and glazes, painting techniques{h. 13 in, w. 52 in, d. 1 in}.

Right: *Modern Teapot,* 1999, slip-cast whiteware, carved freehand {h. 10 in, w. 12 in, d. 4 in}.



The greatest art has always been communal, the expression—in highly individualised ways, no doubt—of common aspirations and ideals.
—Roger Fry, "Art and Socialism"

THE OMEGA WORK-SHOPS 1913–19

STORY BY
Julian Stair



Right: Painting on silk was a frequent activity at the Omega Workshops. The design for this silk stole painted with dyes depicting a pair of peacocks is attributed to Roger Fry.



The visual arts in Britain at the turn of the 20th century were notable for the number of artistic groups struggling to find their identity in the wake of the failing Arts and Crafts movement. In 1899 the American›



Left: Roger Fry, the collective's founder and guiding spirit, at work in the Omega Workshops, ca. 1913.

economist Thorstein Veblen dismissed John Ruskin and William Morris's handicraft movement as one of "conspicuous consumption," a criticism echoed at home by the founder and editor of *The Studio* magazine, Charles Holme, for producing "unornamental 'ornaments' with which thoughtless people crowd their living rooms."[1] Painting fared little better, with young artists rejecting the anecdotal nature of the "unrealistic subject meretriciously painted"[2] by Royal Academicians in favor of new developments in Paris. By 1910, even the youthful New English Art Club, formed in the 1880s as an alternative to the Royal Academy had faded, with its members producing a watered-down version of Impressionism.

A new exhibition, "Beyond Bloomsbury: Designs of the Omega Workshops 1913–19," at the Gallery of the Courtauld Institute of Art in London examines how a collective of young artists under the direction of Roger Fry attempted to translate new Post-Impressionist ideas from France through a new decorative approach to a staid and insular English art world. The Courtauld is an august art historical institution, and it is significant that its first exhibition of applied art should focus on the Omega Workshops, an alliance that has aroused more antagonism from art historians than almost any other modern group in English art. Arguments over the origins and true identity of British modernism, a prejudice against craft practice, claims of amateurism and even the English obsession with class–"a culture of introspection, illustrated by an art of possessions"[3]–have marginalized Omega's creative achievements.

Omega has also suffered from close association with the Bloomsbury Group, a loose collective of intellectuals who lived in the area around the British Museum in central London during the 1910s and 20s. The group included the artists Duncan Grant and Vanessa Bell, writers Virginia Woolf and E. M. Forster, critics Roger Fry and Clive Bell and the economist John Maynard Keynes among others, whose upper class lives, bohemian lifestyle and liberal sexual attitudes have attracted prurient interest. Over the last decade, however,

1. Charles Holme, "The Potter's Art-Object Lessons from the Far East," *The Studio*, vol. 24, no. 103 (1901), p. 48.
2. Charles Harrison, *English Art and Modernism 1900-1939*, Yale University Press (reprint 1994), p. 19.
3. Rod Mengham, "A World of Their Own," *Tate Magazine*, winter 1999, p. 29 (in response to the exhibition "The Art of Bloomsbury," Tate Britain).

critics such as Christopher Reed have written eloquently about how issues of gender and domesticity have prevented Bloomsbury from receiving its due recognition in orthodox histories. What is beyond doubt is that Omega redefined 19th-century definitions of art, craft and design and offered a new model for artists' collaboration with industry.

The founder and driving force behind Omega was Roger Fry. Moderately successful as a painter but internationally known as a scholar of Renaissance painting, a contemporary art critic and co-editor of *The Burlington Magazine,* Fry was curator of painting at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York between 1905 and 1910 and was offered the directorship of the National Gallery in London, which he declined. However, in 1910 his establishment credentials were severely tested after he curated "Manet and the Post Impressionists,"[4] which caused public outrage at the time but is now credited as shaping the modern movement in Britain. Fry not only introduced the paintings of Van Gogh, Gauguin, Cezanne, Matisse and Picasso to the British public but also supplied a new critical language by which to appreciate them. His Post-Impressionist theory rejected traditional naturalistic representation in favor of a new pictorial approach that used expressive design and heightened sensibilities to engender feeling and emotion. Importantly, Fry's ideas were applicable to all art, and he wrote about English vernacular pottery, African sculpture and Islamic design. Tellingly, he exhibited a series of Fauve decorated pots by Derain, Vlaminck and Matisse to illustrate the formal possibilities of this new approach, stating in a public lecture, "I would instance as a proof of the direction in which the post impressionists are working, the excellence of their pure design as shown in the pottery in the present exhibition."[5]

In 1910, Fry had also taken part in a "vigorous" discussion at the Society of Arts concerning the relationship between the fine and applied arts, and in response wrote, "Among professional artists there is... a vague idea that a man can still remain a gentleman if he paints bad pictures, but must forfeit the conventional right to his Esquire if he makes good pots or serviceable furniture."[6] Sympathetic to the values of Morris through his friendship as a young man with the designer C. R. Ashbee, Fry first thought of founding Omega in 1912, after he curated a second Post-Impressionist exhibition with contributions from a like-minded group of English artists he had cultivated over the previous three years. Fry's aim was for Omega to be "a workshop for decorative and applied art" but without the social and political agenda of the Arts and Crafts movement–"I am not a Socialist, he stated emphatically."[7]

Energized by his discovery of modern French painting, primitive art, early Chinese stoneware and more, Fry aimed to infiltrate Post-Impressionist ideas of design into the conservative›

4. Desmond MacCarthy, "The Art-Quake of 1910," *The Listener,* London, February 1, 1945, pp. 123–129.
5. Roger Fry, "Post-Impressionism," *The Fortnightly Review,* Vol. LXXXIX, January 1911, p. 859.
6. Fry, "A Modern Jeweller," *The Burlington Magazine,* No. LXXXVII, Vol. XVII, June 1910, p. 169.
7. Fry, "Art and Socialism" (1912), *Vision & Design,* Oxford University Press, 1981, p. 39.

Photos/Cat, Bristol Museum & Art Gallery; Tray & Lampstands/Victoria and Albert; Plates, Courtauld.



Left: Painted wood lampstands show Omega members' delight in decorating purchased household objects with vivid colors.



Below: Plates with sailboat designs, 1913, attributed to painter Duncan Grant, are commercial plates painted over the glaze.



Left: This brown-glazed terra-cotta cat, ca. 1913, was by the sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska.



Below: Gaudier-Brzeska also designed *The Wrestlers,* 1913, a wood tray with marquetry.



world of the English domestic interior. His motives were also philanthropic, for the artists were to be paid a livable salary for a maximum of three and a half days per week so as not to disrupt their own work. "[Omega] may serve to offer profitable employment to artists who, by their paintings alone, may be quite unable to make a livelihood."[8] After raising £1,500 (approximately $150,000 in today's terms) from individual subscriptions, including a donation by the playwright George Bernard Shaw, Fry launched Omega Workshops Ltd in 1913. Over its six-year lifespan, Fry employed many of the leading young artists in London, including Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, Paul Nash, Edward Wadsworth and, briefly, Wyndham Lewis, who left to form an alternative group before becoming the self-appointed leader of the Vorticists, a group modeled on the Italian Futurists.

Practical craft skills at Omega were limited, so Fry proposed a manageable start focusing on "the design of wall decorations in tempera and mosaic; of printed cotonades; of silks painted in Gobelin dyes for curtains and dresses; painted screens; painted furniture."[9] Functional chairs, tables and screens were brought in along with smaller household goods such as pottery, candlesticks and wooden boxes for the members to decorate with their Fauve- and Cubist-inspired designs. Technically demanding items such as printed textiles, furnishing fabrics and furniture were produced off-site by skilled cabinetmakers in London and textile factories in Lyons. A strict rule of Omega was that all work would be anonymous, only signed with the workshop stamp Ω, the last letter of the Greek alphabet. This leveling process meant that pieces could be designed and produced by different individuals for the common benefit of the workshop, avoiding issues of individual ego.

8. *Pall Mall Gazette*, April 11, 1913.
9. Fry letter to George Bernard Shaw, December 11, 1912.
10. Fry, Omega catalog, 1914.

Omega sold an extensive range of work, from dresses to toys and paper flowers, elegant writing tables with marquetry designs, peasant work brought back from European holidays and colorful English woven textiles destined for colonial markets in Africa. Fry believed in the free play of expressive design. "The artist… creates not only for need but for joy,"[10] he stated in an Omega catalog. Preferring the freshness of primitive or peasant work to soulless factory products, Fry rejected the concept of "finish" as "more often a work of patience than art" and was careful to explain that, when used, industrial techniques were selected to preserve as much of the "freedom and spontaneity of the original drawing" as possible. His claim that the artists' delight in the creation of "objects for common life" and refusal to spoil their expressive quality by "sandpapering it down to a shop finish" stretched the truth, however, as the majority of the artists had in fact little experience of practical work. This separation between design and production ironically followed the practice of many Arts and Crafts designers, who, despite the rhetoric surrounding the value of handwork, often relied on skilled artisans to realize their designs.

Pottery at Omega proved to be the exception, for Fry

began taking throwing lessons from George Schenk, an 80-year-old flowerpot maker. Fry produced a limited range of elementary pottery that in true Omega style was decorated by the workshop artists. Frustrated by the limitations of Schenk, Fry then began to work with Carter, Stabler and Adams (later Poole Pottery) and developed a range of practical earthenware tableware predominantly glazed in a simple white majolica glaze, the forms inspired by Fry's love of early English and Chinese pottery. Unusually for Omega, pottery became the individual province of Fry, probably because he alone was disciplined enough to learn the necessary skills for production. Sales outstripped his ability to produce work, so a hybrid series of plates and bowls were created using casts taken from originals, with all their imperfections, and then produced by the process of jiggering, an industrial technique more efficient than throwing. Fry wrote at length about pottery in the Omega catalog, arguing that it was "essentially a form of sculpture… its surface should express directly the artist's sensibility both of proportion and surface."

Despite ongoing concerns over money, Omega prospered in its first year, taking part in three major exhibitions, receiving important commissions and attracting good publicity. However, it was inevitable that the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 would have a detrimental impact on the viability of the workshops. Fry was determined to keep going, as much to support his artists who "would be destitute owing to the general crisis," and continued to invest his personal money. Broadening Omega's scope, Fry organized exhibitions from French painting to children's art; the workshop became a talking shop and alternative venue for pacifist meetings, poetry readings and theatrical performances, all in the face of a cultural retrenchment from a battered and nationalistic public. When the inevitable occurred and a disenchanted Fry finally closed the doors of Omega in July 1919, he wrote, in a letter to the novelist Arnold Bennett, "the commercialists will have it all their own way and there will no more attempt at really creative design."[11]

Ironically, Omega closed at the time when public taste in Edwardian England was beginning to change. The architectural historian Nicholas Pevsner argued as early as 1941 that Omega established precepts in art and design for avant-garde developments to come in France and Germany. Design history is now again reevaluating its contribution and Tanya Harrod recently wrote that "the eclectic British modernism of the inter-war years… would be unimaginable without the precedent of Omega."[12] Whether the Courtauld Institute of Art's exhibition will finally establish wider recognition for this vibrant and atypical period of English art and design remains to be seen. Perhaps Fry's closing remarks on Omega, "We were too early," still apply.

Julian Stair is a writer, lecturer and internationally exhibiting potter.

11. Fry to Arnold Bennett, 1919.
12. Tanya Harrod, "The Omega Project," *Crafts*, May/June 2009, p. 61.

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"Beyond Bloomsbury" is at the Courtauld Gallery, London (June 18 – September 20); the multi-author catalog is £25 from shop@sctenterprises.com.





Above: The signboard by Duncan Grant, 1915, of oil on wood with metal studs, hung outside the Omega Workshops premises.

Left: The screen *Bathers in a Landscape,* 1913, gouache and pencil on canvas, is by painter Vanessa Bell.

Opposite: This Omega design for a scarf or rug, gouache and pencil on newsprint paper, 1913–15, shows the influence of the painter Vassily Kandinsky.

Photos/Victoria and Albert Museum.

CRAFT IN UNEXPECTED PLACES

STORY BY
Joyce Lovelace

Craft has a strong, if somewhat unexpected, presence these days at two high-profile Los Angeles museums. Beyond showing representative objects, both places are connecting craft to other disciplines as part of a bigger story. Both also celebrate craft's collaborative essence, but in strikingly different ways.

At the venerable Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens in suburban San Marino, a new wing devoted to American art makes inspired use of craft in a rich historical narrative. A world away in trendy West Hollywood, the Museum of Contemporary Art explores the convergence of craft and technology at the vanguard of design and architecture practice.

Seeing craft in two such dissimilar venues and contexts may be counterintuitive, but that's part of the fun. To use a showbiz analogy (this is L.A., after all), it's like watching an underappreciated actor shine in supporting roles in different films—one a big-budget historical epic, the other an experimental short. Both hits.

THE HUNTINGTON

Right: In the Mid-20th-Century Gallery of the redesigned Virginia Steele Scott Galleries, Sam Francis's *Free Floating Clouds*, 1980, occupies a wall next to a case of silver work by Allan Adler.



MOCA

Right: Adam Silverman and Nader Tehrani's *Boolean Valley*, 2009, a recent installation at MOCA Pacific Design Center, the first in its series "Craft and Computation."



Huntington photos/ Tim Street-Porter, MOCA photos/ Brian Forrest.



THE HUNTINGTON

Left: Sam Maloof's *Double Music Stand* and *Musician's Chair*, 1972, of Brazilian rosewood, were commissioned by a noted violist. The painting above is by Karl Benjamin.

THE HUNTINGTON: CRAFT IN AMERICAN HISTORY

A visit to the Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens is an interdisciplinary experience on a grand scale. Set on 120 acres, the former estate of the railroad magnate Henry E. Huntington encompasses a scholarly research center, a world-class art museum, and spectacular grounds. It's an oasis of beauty and culture, a rare expanse of green in Los Angeles.

"You see objects from a different perspective, having walked through the gardens," observes Jessica Todd Smith, curator of the Huntington's American collections, which are showcased in the newly expanded and redesigned Virginia Steele Scott Galleries, opened in May. American art is a relatively young but growing focus at the Huntington, an institution best known for British and French art of the 18th and 19th centuries, including such famous works as *The Blue Boy* by Thomas Gainsborough and *Pinkie* by Thomas Lawrence.

"One of the joys of being curator of a small collection is that you have the great luxury to think in interdisciplinary ways," says Smith, who, in planning the reinstallation of the Scott Galleries, did just that. On her team were Kevin Murphy, an assistant curator at the Huntington, and guest curator of decorative arts Harold Nelson, whose areas of expertise include modern and contemporary craft. Together they arranged a selection of 500 masterpieces into thoughtful groupings of painting, sculpture and decorative arts: a Gilbert Stuart portrait of George Washington with porcelain wares owned by the first president; Frank Lloyd Wright's iconic Husser House dining table and chairs with Arts and Crafts pottery and a Byrdcliffe cabinet; a 1990 silver tea service by Michael Banner with



MOCA

Left: The 400 cut-clay objects in *Boolean Valley* are arranged in an undulating landscape derived from Boolean logic, named for George Boole, a 19th-century mathematician.

MOCA: CRAFT AND THE COMPUTER

Computer technology has brought about dramatic change in the way objects and buildings are designed and assembled, opening up a range of forms and fabrication methods once unimaginable.

"Some would say that this spells the end of handcraft. We don't agree," says Benjamin Ball of the Los Angeles-based Ball-Nogues Studio, which creates experimental installations that engage and transform spaces. "In our case, digital information informs handwork. We are not, however, using handwork in a nostalgic kind of way. Handwork is necessary to our processes and we use it to aesthetic ends."

Hand meets machine with transcendent results in the exhibition series "Craft and Computation" at the Museum of Contemporary Art's gallery at the Pacific Design Center. It evolved out of "seeing how a lot of younger architects and designers are working now," explained Brooke Hodge, the former curator of architecture and design at MOCA, who initiated the series this past spring (she was among 17 staff members laid off in May by the museum, which cited financial difficulties). "They have access to very sophisticated digital technology and equipment, but they're definitely very interested in craft. Often they're designing digitally, then when it comes to the fabrication and assembly, reverting to craft techniques to render what they want to do on an architectural scale." And far from losing the individuality of handwork to a machine, they're using technology to realize once-impossible dreams.

Boolean Valley, the debut show, came to MOCA March 22 through July 5 from the Montalvo Arts Center near San Jose, where it was

silver from the 1700s. The resulting mix highlights continuity and connection across centuries and disciplines.

The installation unfolds in loosely chronological order, starting with the Colonial period, over 16,000 square feet in a series of 15 gorgeous galleries designed by Stephen Saitas. One of the revelations is just how close to the present the American collections come. Entering the last space, visitors may be forgiven their first reaction: modern abstract art? At the *Huntington?*

Sure enough, the Mid-20th-Century Gallery heralds a bold and unprecedented step into new terrain for this august institution. It's the largest space, a dramatic setting for the work of artists such as Helen Frankenthaler, Robert Motherwell, Joseph Cornell, Ed Ruscha and Louise Nevelson. Here, as in the earlier period rooms, craft objects share pride of place with painting and sculpture. "The emphasis is on the creative spirit," not the medium, Smith says. When, during the planning stages, the curators thought about handcrafted furniture for this gallery, "the first person who came to mind, of course, was Sam Maloof." The famed woodworker, then in his 90s and still producing in his studio in nearby Alta Loma, was not yet represented in the Huntington collection, but was the quintessential American designer-craftsman.

A bit of backstory: in 1972 Jan Hlinka, principal violist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, commissioned Maloof to make a music stand with a pair of racks to accommodate two players, as well as a practice chair that would provide good back support and plenty of leg and elbow room. Maloof obliged, crafting handsome designs in Brazilian rosewood. The two men became friends, and at the musician's request, Maloof never replicated the chair. When Hlinka died, his widow, recognizing the importance of the pieces, returned them to their maker.

Familiar with these works and the lovely story behind them, the Huntington curators went to see Maloof in 2008 and asked to borrow them for the Scott Galleries. He agreed, and as a complement, also loaned from his personal collection a group of important pieces by studio craft masters—ceramics by Paul Soldner, Gertrud and Otto Natzler, Laura Andreson and Harrison McIntosh, a glass plate by Glen Lukens, a turned-wood vessel by Bob Stocksdale.

Today *Double Music Stand* and *Musician's Chair* are radiant in the gallery, and in good company. Above them hangs a geometric painting by Maloof's old friend Karl Benjamin. *Free Floating Clouds,* a massive 1980 canvas by their fellow Southern Californian Sam Francis, commands an entire wall. A case is filled with sleek accessories by Allan Adler, "Silversmith to the Stars." Maloof's craft objects are there, along with two Lukens ceramics from the Huntington trove and a stunning Peter Voulkos vase on loan from the collector and dealer Frank Lloyd. It adds up to a snapshot of the lively artists' community that thrived in California in the early postwar years—a fitting tribute to Maloof, whose gregarious nature and generosity of spirit epitomized that collegial side of the craft field.

The bittersweet twist is that Maloof never got to see it all: he died on May 21, nine days before the opening of the wing. But the deeply American qualities embodied in his work, of ingenuity grounded in tradition, resonate throughout the Scott Galleries, helping bring history to life.

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huntington.org

curated by Julie Lazar. A collaboration between Adam Silverman and Nader Tehrani, it presented 400 cut-clay objects arranged into an undulating topographic landscape derived from Boolean logic, which was developed in the 1840s by the mathematician George Boole and is the basis for modern digital computer science.

Silverman and Tehrani have been friends ever since both were architecture students at the Rhode Island School of Design, and had always wanted to do a project together. Silverman was a practicing architect and had a hip-hop clothing business with the Beastie Boys before becoming a full-time ceramist in 2002; now well known for his earthy, elegant pots, he's currently studio director at the Heath Ceramics store in L.A. Tehrani is a professor of architecture at MIT and a principal with the Boston-based firm Office dA. Over the course of a year, the two designed *Boolean Valley* together on the computer, then Silverman made prototypes that were fabricated for the installation. Their objective was a work that would reflect their shared interest in material, but also be true to their individual skills and vision.

"The core of what I do is, I sit at a stool and make a wheel go around in a circle, and with my two hands I make round things," Silverman says. "That's what I like to do, and I don't want to change. But I loved doing this," he says of the project. "For me, the advantage of using the computer in this context is the kind of horsepower you have. With just pencil and paper, it would have taken us three years longer than it did, and it would have been less interesting. We were able to come up with so many iterations. It was freeing in terms of exhausting the possibilities."

Like Silverman and Tehrani, the Ball-Nogues partners have cross-disciplinary leanings and eclectic backgrounds. Ball did architectural design as well as set design for film; in the early 90s he worked on music videos by Janet Jackson, Marilyn Manson and Nine Inch Nails. Gaston Nogues spent over a decade with the celebrated architect Frank Gehry's firm, where he was "the go-to guy for unusual models, product prototypes and full-scale mockups of building systems," says Ball. For their MOCA installation (July 26–November 15), organized by Alma Ruiz, they've expanded and reinterpreted an environment they did for the 2008 Venice Architecture Biennale—an elaborate contrivance of thousands of strings, hung in space in catenary curves to form a kind of dense rolling fog. A custom software program was used to create iterations of catenary arrays; Ball-Nogues also designed and fabricated a machine, called the Installator, to measure and cut the individual lengths of string as determined by the computer. Then they gathered a bunch of friends and colleagues together for the actual installation. As Ball explains, "Our work is often very intricate and requires a lot of labor. Often it's done without many financial resources. We make up for that with human resources."

Technology may liberate handwork, but handwork offers a human counterweight to the distance and isolation technology sometimes creates. "One of the big rewards our work provides is the community it fosters between collaborators," Ball says. "We try to mix work with a bit of life."

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At the turn of the 20th century, the Society of Arts and Crafts, Boston, spread the gospel of design reform nationwide.

When Boston Led the Way

ESSAY BY
Beverly K. Brandt

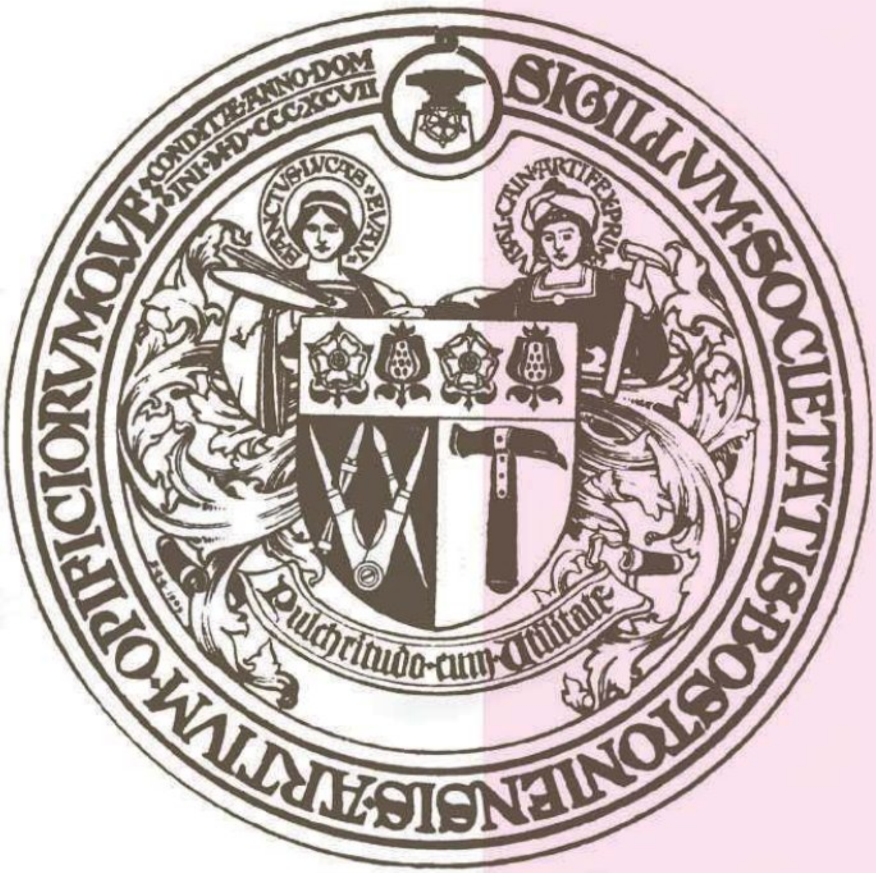


FIGURE 1
Seal of the Society of Arts and Crafts, Boston, designed by Bertram G. Goodhue, ca. 1897.



FIGURE 2
Cover: *The Craftsman and the Critic: Defining Usefulness and Beauty in Arts and Crafts-Era Boston*, by Beverly K. Brandt (University of Massachusetts Press, 2009, $65). The cover design by Sally Nichols features the original study of a lily by Arthur Wesley Dow.

"Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful," advised the English designer, poet and social reformer William Morris in the 1880s. With that statement, he launched a campaign for design reform—epitomized by the quest for Usefulness and Beauty—that obsessed craft workers, critics and consumers at the end of the 19th century. In America, these constituencies turned to the Society of Arts and Crafts, Boston, founded in 1897, [FIGURE 1] an organization whose preeminence in design reform I explore in *The Craftsman and the Critic* [FIGURE 2]. The SACB promoted rigorous standards in its exhibitions, publications and salesroom. Boston was an appropriate context for this organization, in part because of its leadership in education, architecture and publishing. Under the influence of these professions, Bostonians committed themselves to design reform, finding in the tenets of the earlier Aesthetic movement and the later Arts and Crafts movement the inspiration to transform their homes and workplaces into environments that exemplified the useful and the beautiful.

Commenting upon Boston's leadership, Candace Wheeler—a partner in the New York design firm Associated Artists (along with Louis Tiffany,

Lockwood de Forest and Samuel Colman)—said of the city's first display of contemporary handicrafts: "I have made an attempt for several years to organize such an exhibit in New York, but, as usual, found that Boston is more ready to act in matters which are purely in the interests of art than New York" (*Boston Herald,* March 1897). Wheeler—founder of the New York Society of Decorative Arts and organizer of the Women's Exchange—understood the role such an exhibition might play in educating consumers. England's Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society had been holding such shows since the 1880s and thus served as a precedent.

Boston's embrace of the Arts and Crafts movement was due partly to the influence of architects. Schooled in history and contemporary theory, fresh from the Grand Tour or trips sketching old buildings along the Eastern seaboard and aware of the city's legacy of Colonial-era handicraft while cognizant of the latest building technologies, Boston's architects dedicated themselves to design reform. Not content with designing only a building's outer shell, they integrated structure with interior decor, rejecting the elaboration typical of so many late-Victorian interiors and merging usefulness and beauty. The architects created exquisite interiors in collaboration with skilled craft workers, who executed finishes, fittings and furnishings to exacting specifications. In so doing, they followed the model of Morris, Philip Webb and the Pre-Raphaelites, who had collaborated on the design and furnishing of Morris's own home, Red House, in 1859. Boston's architects—many of whom were also educators—understood that their professional success depended upon craft workers' expertise. An architect might develop the overall concept for a home or workplace, but craft workers created the interior elements with which users were in daily contact. And they ensured that the completed structure was functional and attractive, visually and tactilely.

Equally important was Boston's publishing industry, which produced handsome volumes of the works of John Ruskin and Morris—the key theorists of design reform—as well as illustrated architectural periodicals and›



FIGURE 3
Three book covers: Lillian Bell, *A Little Sister to the Wilderness,* cover designed by Bruce Rogers; Paul Margueritte, *L'Avril,* cover designed by Bruce Rogers; Edmund Gosse, *In Russet and Silver,* cover designed by Will Bradley. (Author's collection.)

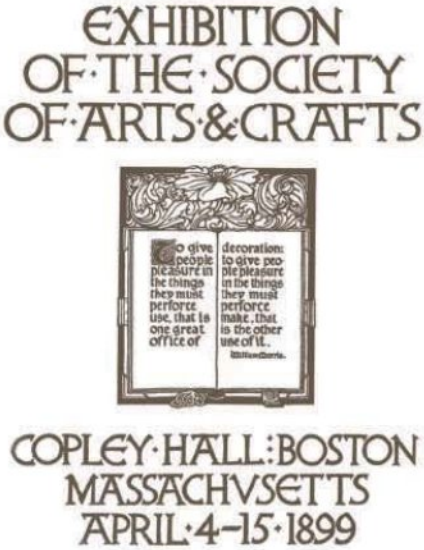


FIGURE 4
Catalog cover for the second "Exhibition of The Society of Arts & Crafts" (1899), designed by William Porter Jenkins.

"little magazines" for the artistic-literary set. The book arts flourished in Boston: covers, bindings and illustrations attest to the impact of the Aesthetic and Arts and Crafts movements in the region [FIGURE 3].

Architects and book artists were among those who organized the important "First Exhibition of the Arts & Crafts," in 1897 and founded the society shortly thereafter. Participants in what became a regular event [FIGURE 4] included "workmen, artists, and lovers of art," as promotional pamphlets described them. The last group comprised the social elite, designated as "associates" in the society's organizational structure, who patronized the workshops and studios of the first two, purchasing their works or hiring them for special commissions. Members in the "craftsman" category, the largest, were professionals–at an early stage of their careers–or skilled amateurs. Only a select group–who had achieved acclaim in their field–received the designation "master." (It was possible to advance from one designation to the next.) In 1913, the SACB added the category of "medallist" for those who epitomized the organization's highest honor.

To exhibit or sell under the society's auspices, members had to submit their work to a jury of review. For years, the SACB jury operated anonymously, but eventually its composition became known. Jurors sought to articulate and enforce rigorous criteria governing every aspect of their constituents' work. They encouraged novices to take chances and challenged masters to surpass their already high standards. They singled out exceptional achievements–with commendations or medals–while encouraging workers to explore a range of media beyond clay, metal, glass, wood and fiber. (A membership survey from 1917, for example, identified over 50 designations, including photographer, ship modeler, colorist of plaster casts and cement worker.)

During the society's first two decades, nearly a third of the jurors were women and the group as a whole represented myriad disciplines. Most jurors were multitalented practitioners who taught classes, wrote technical and theoretical tracts, and lectured to diverse audiences. As they articulated a gospel of "good design," they demonstrated their knowledge of the latest international theories, espousing naturalism, historicism, conventionalization and expression. "For your teachers, they must be Nature and History," Morris declared, urging his followers to regard the former as muse and the latter as a precedent. From both, they might learn crucial lessons regarding form, ornament, materials and construction. Conventionalization, argued the English designer, educator and author Lewis F. Day, required "reticence or restraint, of doing not all that the artist could have done, but just what is called for by the occasion" (*Ornament and Its Application,* 1904). Expression–an intangible quality that transcended appearance, function, fabrication or concept–communicated something about maker and artifact that resonated with the user. It was what the American artist, teacher and writer Arthur W. Dow called "that mysterious force that lays hold upon the imagination" (*Composition,* 1899) [FIGURE 5] [FIGURE 6].



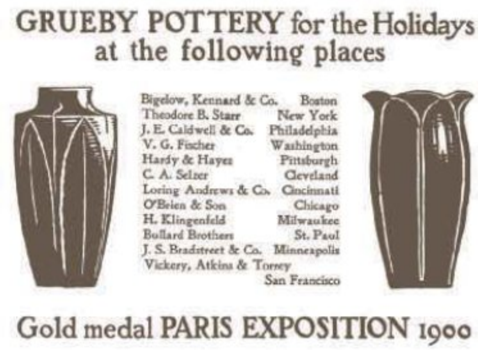
FIGURE 5
Ceramic tile bracket by Ernest Batchelder.



FIGURE 6
Ceramic vase with relief-molded ornamentation, ca. 1900, designed for the Grueby Pottery by George P. Kendrick.

The Society's "Statement of Purpose" (crafted in 1897) articulated its philosophy of usefulness and beauty. It promoted "the dignity and value of good design" and strove to "counteract the popular impatience of Law and Form, and the desire for over-ornamentation and specious originality. It insist[ed] upon the necessity of sobriety and restraint, of ordered arrangement, of due regard for the relation between the form of an object and its use, and of harmony and fitness in the decoration put upon it." Such words as sobriety and restraint implied an aesthetic conservatism in the approach of the jury and its constituents, as well as in their attitude toward design reform.

The jury's standards ultimately spread nationwide [FIGURE 7]. For example, at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, in St. Louis in 1904, which was the first world's fair to include handicrafts in the Palace of Art alongside painting, sculpture and architecture [FIGURE 8]. Frederick Allen Whiting, the society's autocratic secretary, organized the display and established a national standard for regional juries of review. SACB architects participated in site planning for the fair, designed several exhibition buildings, and displayed drawings, models and photographs of their work. SACB craftsmen and masters contributed nearly half of the handicrafts displayed in the Palace of Art and received more than half of the major awards. "The Society of Arts and Crafts had to congratulate itself," wrote F. W. Coburn, a Boston critic, "when the list of awards was published for the first time in the United States in the Boston Herald" (Coburn Scrapbook/Boston Public Library). The prominence of the SACB at the largest world's fair held to date strengthened its visibility as an arbiter of taste.





Other ways in which the society's standards spread resulted from its growth. What began in 1897 as a small organization with well-established Boston roots had grown by the time of the Great War into an entity with nearly a thousand members living in 30 states and nine foreign countries. Though separated by distance, these members dedicated themselves to promoting a common standard of "good design," constituting, in essence, a Boston diaspora. As they traveled, lectured, practiced, sold their works or saw them acquired by major museums, their influence spread. The dissemination of those ideals has continued to this day, as examples of its members' work continue to command high prices in the antiques and collectibles market. This is not to suggest that the society's standards of usefulness and beauty are the sole measure of good taste according to the Arts and Crafts ideal in America, only that they were highly influential.

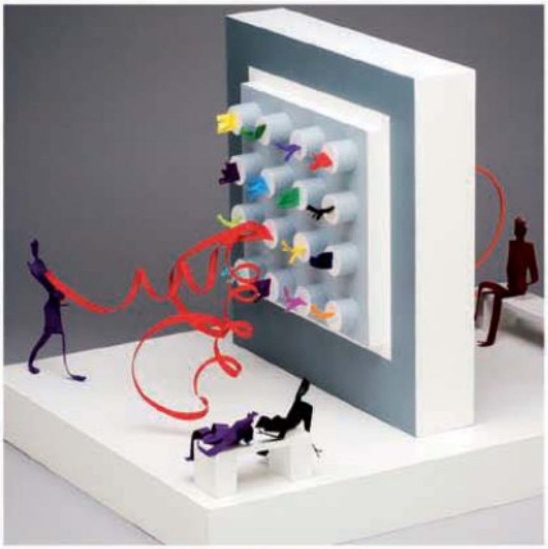
The story of the formative years of the SACB is an important component of the evolution of the profession of design criticism in turn-of-the-century America. Critics were essential to the design reform, or Arts and Crafts, movement. And Boston's critics were as notable for their firm convictions as for the colorful style in which they expressed them. The dynamic interaction of craftsman and critic lay at the heart of design reform and the SACB. The organization provided a context in which the two could come together to further the quest for usefulness and beauty. ✦

Beverly Brandt is a professor in the College of Design, Arizona State University.

FIGURE 7
Advertisement for Grueby Pottery, from *Masters in Art, A Series of Illlustrated Monographs,* 1900.

FIGURE 8
Interior, Palace of Art, Louisiana Purchase Exposition, St. Louis, 1904. (Author's collection.)

Batchelder photo/Courtesy of Cynthia L. Postmus and the trustees of the Charlevoix, MI, Public Library; Kendrick photo/Courtesy of Susan J. Tarlow and Donald Davidoff.



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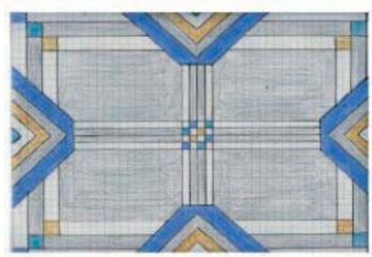
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Image: John Cheer, Allentown, PA. Ceramics. "Untitled."

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COMPETITIONS/EXHIBITIONS

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AD INDEX

AMERICAN CRAFT COUNCIL

The American Craft Council is a national, nonprofit public educational organization founded in 1943 by Aileen Osborn Webb. The mission of the Council is to promote understanding and appreciation of contemporary American craft. Programs include the bimonthly magazine American Craft, annual juried shows presenting artists and their work, the Aileen Osborn Webb Awards honoring excellence, a specialized library, conferences, workshops and seminars.

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This page and opposite: Through his work and his teaching at the University of Minnesota, Warren Mackenzie, shown in his studio, created one of the centers of functional pottery in the United States.





Explore the Twin Cities! Visit americancraftmag.org for even more information and photos. Click on our Wide World of Craft interactive map to find recommended places to visit, shop, eat and play!



The Twin Cities—a Mecca for Craft

In the last several decades, Minnesota has developed a rich array of craft institutions.

STORY BY
Michael Fallon

PHOTOGRAPHY BY
Cameron Wittig



Minneapolis and St. Paul may struggle with an image of long, ice-cold winters, but craftspeople can warm to the many opportunities and organizations that present themselves in the beautiful land of 10,000 lakes. Lovers of craft in the Twin Cities of Minnesota have an enviable number of options. They can visit nationally renowned member-based organizations such as the Minnesota Center for Book Arts, the Northern Clay Center, the Textile Center of Minnesota and the Gallery of Wood Art. They can see exhibitions of valuable museum-based collections of craft at such institutions as the Goldstein Museum of Design, Weisman Art Museum and the Minneapolis Institute of Art; or they can shop at sundry for-profit and artist-run ventures like the Xylos Gallery, Century Studios, the Grand Hand Gallery, the Art Resources Gallery and the Frank Stone Gallery. (Even the Walker Art Center, not usually focused on craft, is presenting a clay show this fall.) With so much to choose from, it's difficult to imagine that only 30 years ago none of this existed.

"In the late 1960s," says David Glenn, a St. Cloud-based ceramic artist, "there wasn't a single place to display craft in Minneapolis." What led to so much craft activity, and created so many enduring institutions and organizations in so brief a timespan can be best described as serendipity, a kind of local cultural hundred-year flood. In the early-to-mid-1980s, corporate support for the arts, along with governmental, philanthropic and foundation support, all peaked simultaneously exactly when the numbers of local artists skyrocketed. This resulted in the proliferation of all kinds of arts activities: local theaters, record labels and music venues, publishing houses, writing centers and galleries.

According to Glenn, it was amid this great explosion in activity and attention to local arts that craftspeople decided they wanted to develop a market for their work. In 1974, 10 local artisans—including the later-celebrated Warren MacKenzie, Peter Leach and Judy Onofrio—founded the Minnesota Craft Council (MCC), an open-membership artists network committed to increasing the visibility of fine craft. "The craft council set a standard of professionalism," says Glenn, who became the organization's director in 1997 and served for 10 years. "It was home to artists who were honing the›

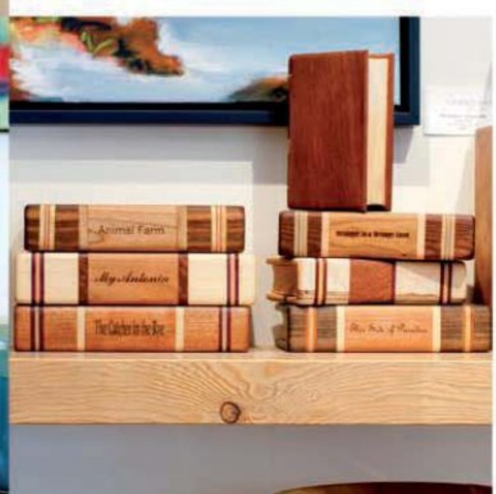
Below: The rising craft awareness of the past several decades has led to success for many galleries, such as Ann Ruhr Pifer's the Grand Hand Gallery in St. Paul.



quality of their craft. They made the first steps into those institutions and took craft to a higher level in Minnesota." The MCC provided a huge number of opportunities for local craftspeople through a quarterly magazine and newsletter, workshops for artists by artists and a highly anticipated annual fair. It boomed in the 1980s and into the 90s, with memberships peaking at 550 craftspeople.

Following the MCC's lead, in 1983 local book artists and enthusiasts founded the Minnesota Center for Book Arts. Its space, which opened in 1985, boasted excellent studios where masters and novices worked side by side at letterpress presses, bookbinding equipment and Hollander beaters. From the beginning, the center supported the activities of such artists as the noted wood engraver Gaylord Schanilec, Coffee House Press founder Allan Kornblum, book artists Jody Williams, Chip Schilling and three-time Minnesota Book Award winner Paulette Myers-Rich. "The center has been really important to practitioners in a field that's fairly new," says Myers-Rich. "It's really helped to educate people, including students and artists at all levels, as well as creating an audience."





Above: The Grand Hand displays a wide variety of media such as this glass vase by Richard Jones and a wire sculpture by Ruth Jensen. With Minneapolis being a center for wood art, it is no surprise that the gallery also displays an abundance of works in the medium, such as these book boxes by Steven Levine and lathe-turned bowls by Ann Jenkins.

In 1986, a national group of wood artists founded, in Shoreview, Minnesota, the American Association of Woodturners. Dedicated to the advancement of woodturning, the AAW has more than 300 local chapters and 15,000 members in the United States. It hosts an annual woodturning symposium that is held in a new location every year and draws upwards of 1,500 attendees. Based in the historic Landmark Center in downtown St. Paul, where it operates a gift shop and the Gallery of Wood Art, the AAW also gives artist grants. "We're proud of this program," says Tib Shaw, the gallery coordinator. "Local chapters get grants for equipment and training, to teach in schools, to demonstrate the craft of woodturning and for projects with juvenile delinquents."

With the success of these medium-focused organizations, it made perfect sense for several ceramist members of the Minnesota Craft Council to found the Northern Clay Center in 1990. "The center was modeled after Film in the Cities (a now-defunct center for aspiring filmmakers) and the Center for Book Arts," says Emily Galusha, the current executive director. "The idea was to have a place where artists could work and have studios, be involved in exhibitions, and get training and education. We also wanted a place for people to see work by potters outside of their studio settings and the art fairs." With two galleries showing 10 to 13 exhibitions a year and grant and residency programs for both emerging and established artists, including the McKnight Fellowship, the Northern Clay Center is a major player in the Minneapolis craft scene.

Textile artists followed suit in 1994 by founding the Textile Center of Minnesota, an umbrella arts organization for fiber artists and groups. In 2000, the center moved to a one-story brick building in Minneapolis that had once been a Ford auto showroom which was retrofitted to include a gallery, shop, classrooms and studio space.

Over time, the Minnesota Craft Council may have proved too successful at its mission. In 2007, the organization closed because of falling membership levels. According to Glenn and other artisans, there was so much going on in local crafts, and so many options in a saturated market, that advocating for crafts seemed to many to be no longer necessary. "I think we have it pretty good here, in terms of both the audience and the community of artists," says

Jason Trebs, a young ceramist who shows work regularly at the Grand Hand. "I'm incredibly happy being able to make a living here just making functional pots."

Trebs never participated in the MCC or belonged to the Northern Clay Center, but he acknowledges the efforts his predecessors made to establish the local market. He was extremely flattered when Warren MacKenzie, the great master Trebs has always admired, curated his work into the collection at the Weisman Museum of Art.

MacKenzie, for his part, continues working and growing his reputation nationally after making pots for more than 60 years and helping found several enduring institutions. In 1999, he received a Distinguished Artist Award from the McKnight Foundation, recognizing his lifetime body of work. Even with such honors, MacKenzie is humble about what he's accomplished and acknowledges all that the Twin Cities have offered him. "I've had a great time here in this community. I've been able to convince people that the things I'm doing are worthwhile and they might enjoy having them in their home." ✚

Michael Fallon is a St. Paul-based writer.



Right: Sarah Peters, a co-op member of the Minnesota Center for Book Arts, working at a Vandercook press. The center offers studios to masters and novices alike, while also holding exhibitions and education programs.

"I think we have it pretty good here, in terms of both the audience and the good community of artists."
—Jason Trebs





Left: St. Paul-based potter Jason Trebs has found an extremely supportive community for his ceramic pieces such as this 12-inch high *Vase.*

Above: "The Spindle" exhibition at the Gallery of Wood Art included the work of Jim Keller, Charles Farrar, Gorst duPlessis and Jennifer Shirley.

In the Tapestrymaker's Mode

STORY BY
Christine Kaminsky

Following a solo exhibition of his work at the University of Florida, Gainesville, the weaver James Bassler was the subject of an article in the August/September 1982 issue of American Craft by fiber artist Nancy Merritt and potter Jacqueline Bartling Ward that illuminated his early life and sources of inspiration, in particular a profoundly influential sojourn in Mexico. Among the processes Bassler then employed to create his tapestries were strip weaving, ikat and batik.

Since the 1980s, Bassler's tapestries have become increasingly complex, incorporating techniques of the Navajo and ancient Andean cultures—building his reputation for focusing on the past.

The recipient of many honors, Bassler was elected a Fellow of the American Craft Council in 1998 and interviewed for Smithsonian's Archives of American Art in 2003. Widely exhibited, his work is in numerous museum collections as well as in the Cotsen American Masters Textile Collection.

Today Bassler is represented by the Jane Sauer Gallery in Santa Fe and the Gail Martin Gallery in New York City. Dismissing any notion that he lives entirely in the past, Bassler, using shopping bags from Trader Joe's, spun and wove a paper bag, complete with handles, that the Martin Gallery recently displayed at the International Tribal and Textile Arts Show in New York. The artist can be seen on film in one of two new episodes of the PBS series *Craft in America*, scheduled to air on October 7.

Jane Sauer says "Jim's work has the integrity and depth that few ever obtain and he has sustained this level of making for over 40 years. Dedicated to the past and the future, Jim is truly a national treasure."

To view the entire American Craft article, visit us at americancraftmag.org.

Tucked away on the sixth floor of 72 Spring Street in New York City is the American Craft Council library, one of the largest collections in this country of craft, art and design books documenting the studio craft movement from the 1940s to the present. The over 14,000 volumes include the Council's 67-year publishing history—all past issues of *Craft Horizons* and American Craft. We'd like to share some of this amazing past as we dig through the stacks. If you happen to be in the city, come in and say hello—the library is open to the public.







Sprinkling Rain 2008
10 1/2 x 8 1/2 x 13 1/2 inches